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SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 2005

Attack on Bradley kills 7 GIs in Iraq

2 Marines killed in other incidents in deadliest day since December

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Iraqis, military divided on vote

Marine commander says the country is ready while some local officials believe a fair and safe election is impossible

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PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GIORDANO/Stars and Stripes

Above: Lt. Col. Gary Stevens, commander of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, seated at right, tells local mayors through a translator that elections will go ahead as scheduled on Jan. 30. Top left: Along the road to Baghdad, a U.S. Marine from the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment pulls security from atop a Humvee. One of the main concerns the mayors expressed was a lack of security in the area known as the Sunni Triangle.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Spector shooting transcripts: Rock music producer Phil Spector initially told police he mistakenly shot actress Lana Clarkson, though he has since changed his story to suggest she committed suicide, according to newly released grand jury transcripts.

Alhambra, Calif., Police Officer Beatrice Rodriguez testified that Spector told officers at his home, "What's wrong with you guys? What are you doing? I didn't mean to shoot her. It was an accident."

Spector, 64, who created rock 'n' roll's "wall of sound" recording technique, is charged with murdering Clarkson at his Alhambra mansion in early 2003. He has pleaded not guilty and is free on \$1 million bail.

The Los Angeles Times reported Friday on the contents of the five volumes of grand jury transcripts, which include testimony from police, women who had been previously threatened by Spector, and friends of Clarkson.

Three women also testified that Spector, in separate incidents, had acted recklessly and threatened them with a gun.

Blake trial: Robert Blake cried out and put his hands to his head when he was told his wife was dead, but a police detective testified the actor didn't shed any tears.

John Michael Coffey was the latest in a string of prosecution witnesses to question the sincerity of Blake's reactions on the night of May 4, 2001, when his wife, Bonny Lee Bakley, was shot to death. "I noticed he didn't have any tears. It didn't seem to me to be a sincere cry," Coffey testified Thursday at Blake's murder trial.

Blake claims he and his wife went to his car on a nearby street after eating dinner at Vitell's restaurant, and he left her to return to the restaurant to retrieve his gun, which he had forgotten. He claims he found Bakley bleeding when he got back to the car.

Crematory case: A former crematory operator who admitted dumping 334 bodies and passing off cement dust as their ashes pleaded guilty Friday to Tennessee charges and was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Ray Brent Marsh, 31, listened to a series of statements from Tennessee relatives of those whose bodies were mishandled at his Tut-Sale Crematory in Georgia and then apologized. Marsh could be eligible for parole in four years, Circuit Judge Carroll L. Ross said in handing down the sentence.

The sentencing was part of an agreement between officials in Tennessee and Georgia, where Marsh pleaded guilty in November to 787 counts of theft, abuse of a corpse, burial service fraud and making false statements. The deal calls for the Tennessee sentence to be served concurrently with the same recommended sentence in Georgia.

San Diego mayoral vote: Three voters asked a court Thursday to overturn the election of San Diego Mayor Dick Murphy and install a write-in candidate, saying more than 5,000 ballots were unfairly thrown out.

The voters filed a lawsuit alleging the county registrar violated state election law by disqualifying ballots on which voters wrote the name of candidate Donna Frye but did not mark the ballot.

If those ballots had been counted, Frye would have won the Nov. 2 election, the suit claimed.

Aaliyah crash: Aaliyah's record company cannot sue the video producer that arranged the airplane flight on which the singer and eight others crashed and died in the Bahamas in 2001, Manhattan appeals court ruled Thursday.



Midwest storms: Jeannette Serrato, front, looks on in shock Thursday as she begins to see the devastation caused by flooding at her home south of Indianapolis, as neighbor Gary Henderson, back, escorts her through the water in his boat. Rivers were at or above flood stage at 30 locations around the state, according to the National Weather Service, and most of the streams were not expected to crest until Saturday. A pair of storms, meanwhile, were moving in on the West Coast. A regional winter storm warning was extended through Monday.

The state Supreme Court's Appellate Division decided the lawsuit brought by Black-ground Records, which the singer partly owned, saying that in this case the singer's parents had a right to sue for her wrongful death. The court said the parents did so and were compensated.

Aaliyah had just finished shooting a music video when she and eight others were killed in the crash of a twin-engine Cessna as it left Marsh Harbor on Abaco Island in the Bahamas en route to Florida on Aug. 25, 2001. She was 22.

World

Mandela's son: Former President Nelson Mandela, a leading AIDS campaigner, won local and international praise Friday for disclosing that his son died of the disease.

The U.N. AIDS agency said Mandela's decision Thursday was an example of his unwavering leadership in the fight against stigma and discrimination associated with HIV. Makgatho Mandela, who had been the former president's only surviving son, died Thursday at age 54.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to some 70 percent of the 45 million people worldwide infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. More than 5 million of South Africa's 45 million people are infected, more than in any other country.

Israel-Palestinian conflict: Palestinian presidential front-runner Mahmoud Abbas canceled a campaign stop in Jerusalem on Friday, saying Israeli security arrangements would have embarrassed him, and Israel forced a second candidate to leave the city after he tried to pray at a holy site.

Meanwhile, outside the West Bank city of Nablus, Palestinian militants shooting from a moving car attacked a group of Israelis, killing one and wounding three, the Israeli military said. The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a violent group linked to Abbas' Fatah movement, claimed responsibility.

The attack came two days before the Palestinian elections, and just a day after militant leaders in Nablus told Abbas they would support his efforts to reach a cease-fire with Israel. Also Friday, Israeli forces shot to death a 23-year-old Palestinian man walking near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian security officials said. The Israeli army said the man was armed with an anti-tank missile and was suspected of planning an attack on the settlement.

Croatia election: The presidential candidate who disputed results of Croatia's weekend election said Friday he has now accepted

defeat and will instead run in the country's local election in the spring.

"I will respect the law," Boris Miksic said, two days after Croatia's highest judicial body rejected as "unfounded" his request that the election results be annulled and the vote repeated.

Belfast bank robbery: The Irish Republican Army committed last month's massive robbery of a Belfast bank, the Northern Ireland police commander bluntly announced Friday in a move that complicated the province's peacekeeping efforts.

Chief Constable Hugh Orde said his detectives probing the Dec. 20 theft at Northern Bank — when a hostage-taking gang stole an estimated \$50 million, the biggest all-cash robbery in history — were confident that members of the outlawed IRA planned it and carried it out.

The IRA and its allied Sinn Fein party have rejected mounting accusations of IRA involvement in the robbery. Speaking shortly before Orde, Sinn Fein deputy leader Martin McGuinness — a reputed IRA commander since the mid-1970s — said the IRA had told him it wasn't involved.

Spain's EU constitution pitch: Soccer stars, celebrity actors, singers and journalists on Friday kicked off a government campaign aimed at explaining the European Union's new constitution, as Spain prepares for a Feb. 20 referendum — the first popular vote in any EU country on the charter.

Recent surveys found that 89 percent of Spaniards knew little to nothing about the constitution. However, the surveys showed that the "yes" is likely to pass as 75 percent said they plan to vote in the referendum.

N. Korea accusations: North Korea said Friday it attached little significance to the planned visit next week by members of Congress and accused Washington of plotting to topple Pyongyang's communist regime.

A bipartisan congressional delegation is scheduled to visit North Korea next week, where a key topic of discussion will likely be the stalled six-nation talks on the North's nuclear weapons programs.

In a commentary posted Friday on Unirunskir.com, a North Korean government-run Web site, the regime said it was "seriously upset" because the United States was spreading a theory of a North Korean collapse. "The United States is hiding a dagger while talking about 'six-party talks' and the 'dispatch of a congressional delegation.'"

"We cannot help boosting our vigilance at this flagrant, sinister, two-faced attitude," it said.

Stories and photos from wire services

Roadside bomb kills 7 soldiers riding in Bradley

Two Marines killed in separate incident on deadly day for military

By NICK WADHAMAS
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A roadside bomb killed seven U.S. soldiers in northwest Baghdad and two Marines were killed in western Iraq on Thursday, the deadliest day for American forces since a suicide attack on a U.S. base last month.

The soldiers with Task Force Baghdad were on patrol Thursday evening when their Bradley fighting vehicle hit the explosive, the military said in a statement. Everyone inside the Bradley was killed.

The two Marines killed in action Thursday were members of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and lost their lives in Anbar province, which is home to the volatile city of Fallujah.

On Friday, a top U.S. military official raised fears that insurgents may try to carry out "spectacular" attacks as the Iraq election draws near, while Sunni religious leaders called for unity but persisted in their demands that the vote be delayed.

The comments by Army Brig. Gen. Eric Lessel echoed a warning by Iraq's prime minister the day before that insurgent violence would only increase ahead of the Jan. 30 election for the National Assembly.

Hours after Ayad Allawi spoke, the roadside bomb killed seven U.S. soldiers in northwest Baghdad on Thursday.

A state of emergency, originally announced two months ago, also

was extended Thursday for 30 days throughout the country except for the northern Kurdish-run areas. The decree includes a nighttime curfew and gives the government additional power to make arrests and launch military or police operations.

Lessel, deputy chief of staff for strategic communications, said the United States has no intelligence indicating specific plans for a major attack but it is a concern. He said the insurgents' biggest weapon was their ability to instill fear.

"I think a worst case is where they have a series of horrific attacks that cause mass casualties in some spectacular fashion in the days leading up to the elections," Lessel said. "If you look over the last six months they have steadily escalated the barbaric nature of the attacks they have been committing. A year ago you didn't see these kinds of horrific things."

In the village of Naimiyah, hundreds of refugees from the destroyed nearby city of Fallujah demonstrated after Friday's prayers demanding that U.S. and Iraqi forces leave the city, open all the roads for residents to go back and pay compensation for damaged property.

The previous four days had seen a string of assassinations, suicide car bombings and other assaults that killed 90 people.

But Thursday's toll was the highest for the U.S. military in Iraq since a suicide bombing at a mess tent in Mosul on Dec. 21



JEFFREY A. WOLF/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

A Bradley fighting vehicle crushes a monument to Saddam Hussein on the streets of Al Hawjah on Dec. 3, 2003. Seven members of Task Force Baghdad were killed while on patrol when their Bradley fighting vehicle hit a roadside bomb Thursday evening.

killed 22 people, including 14 U.S. soldiers and three American contractors.

Allawi said he expected the number of attacks would rise before the Jan. 30 vote and called the decision on prolonging the state of emergency a precaution. He blamed former members of Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated regime for the continuing violence.

"Saddam's followers, who have intensely shed the blood of our people and army, are still in action clandestinely, allying with a bunch of criminals, murderers and terrorists who are the enemies of our people and our progress," Allawi said Thursday during a ceremony to mark the national Army Day holiday.

The Bush administration and Allawi, a secular Shiite, have insisted that the elections go forward, despite calls that some Sunni religious leaders for a boycott. Sunni Arab political parties largely withdrawn from the race because of security fears, particularly in western Iraq. Some have sought a delay of the vote.

During Friday prayers, Sheikh Mahmoud Al-Somaidi of the Sunnis' Association of Muslim Scholars called for unity among Muslims but repeated Sunnis' demand that the vote be delayed.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Thursday, at least 1,349 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press report. At least 1,054 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is nine higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Thursday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had begun, 1,211 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 945 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ Seven soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb in northwest Baghdad on Thursday.

■ Two Marines were killed Thursday in Iraq's Anbar province.

The latest identification reported by the Defense Department:

■ Army Pvt. Cory R. Depew, 21, Beech Grove, Ind.; died Tuesday in Mosul, Iraq, when his vehicle was struck by a grenade, assigned to the 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Wash.

■ Army Sgt. 1st Class Ote J. McVey, 53, Oak Hill, W.Va.; died Nov. 1 in Beaver, W.Va., after being medically evacuated from Baghdad on Sept. 23 for treatment of a noncombat related illness; assigned to the Reserves 706th Transportation Company, Kenton, Ohio.

■ Army Sgt. Foster Pinkston, 47, Warrenton, Ga.; died Sept. 16 in Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Augusta, Ga., from a noncombat related illness; assigned to the National Guard's 87th Engineer Battalion, Augusta, Ga.

Official: Army may try to extend reservists' tours of duty

By ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Stretched thin by the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Army is considering a National Guard and Reserve policy shift that could result in part-timers being called to active-duty multiple times for up to two years each time, a senior Army official said.

The official, who discussed the matter with a small group of reporters on condition of anonymity because the matter has not been fully settled inside the Pentagon, said Thursday the Army probably will ask Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the next several months to change the policy.

The official also said it appeared likely that the Army will ask Congress to permanently increase the statutory size of the Army by 30,000 soldiers, to 512,000. He said that decision would be made next year.

The Army has the authority to add 30,000 soldiers, but arranged for it to be only a temporary boost because it did not want a long-term commitment to the cost of a larger force. But now it appears that the Army has no choice but to accept a permanent increase, the official said.

The Army estimates that a permanent increase of 30,000 soldiers will cost it about \$3 billion a year.

One reason that the National Guard and Reserve have been used so heavily over the past three years is that the active-duty Army is too small to meet the demands of war — particularly in Iraq, where troop levels have far exceeded original predictions — while also maintaining a presence in traditional areas of influence such as Europe and the Korean peninsula.

The Army now has about 660,000 troops on active duty, of which about 160,000 are members of the Guard and Reserve.

The Army wants them to be eligible for an unlimited number of call-ups, so long as no single mobilization lasts more than 24 months, the official said.

Under current policy set by Rumsfeld, a Guard or Reserve member is not to serve on active duty for more than 24 total months. Thus, for example, if a Guard or Reserve member was mobilized for six months after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and later for nine months in Afghanistan, then that person is off limits for duty in Iraq because a yearlong tour there would exceed the 24-month limit.

A standard tour in Iraq, for both active-duty and reserves, is 12 months.

If the limit were set at 24 consecutive months, with some break between tours, then in theory a Guard or Reserve member could be mobilized for multiple 12- or 24-month tours in Iraq or elsewhere.

That is the kind of flexibility the Army has decided it needs in order to sustain the forces needed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the official said. He stressed that the Army would make only sparing use of the authority to call up soldiers for longer tours because it would not want to alienate soldiers.

The National Guard, with about 350,000 members, and the 200,000-strong Reserve already are seeing signs of a slide in recruiting and retaining soldiers. Some may question whether a policy change that results in longer mobilizations could further erode the Guard and Reserve's ability to attract new soldiers and keep the ones it has.

The Guard in particular has been used so much in Iraq and Afghanistan that the Army now has deployed — or put on notice of plans to mobilize in 2005 — all 15 of its main combat brigades.

Wide chasm divides Iraqis, military on vote

Mayors in Sunni Triangle say fair elections are impossible but Marines say they are

By JOSEPH GORDONO

Stars and Stripes

American military commanders in restive Al Anbar Province are warning local leaders that elections will be held on schedule at the end of January, regardless of the security situation or some politicians' opposition to the process.

The region — commonly referred to as the Sunni Triangle, and the epicenter of insurgent attacks — is expected to be the most difficult in Iraq to secure in the run-up to the Jan. 30 election of a national assembly responsible for writing a new constitution.

On Wednesday, senior Marine Corps officials brought their message directly to the mayors of Hit and Baghdad, cities northwest of Fallujah that could be a flash point of violence in coming weeks.

"I know there is some opposition and reluctance to participating in the election," Lt. Col. Greg Stevens, commander of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, told the mayors. "Again, I urge you, without participation there will be no voice for the people of Al Anbar. It's ultimately up to the people whether they choose to vote or not vote, but it is my responsibility to make sure they have that choice."

For their part, the local officials firmly believe the vote cannot happen as scheduled.

"In reality, we can only conclude it is impossible to hold elections in this area. If we take a contrary position, we are deceiving ourselves," said Nassan Anad, Baghdad mayor.

The wide chasm was reflected in the meeting: The two mayors sat on one side of the Baghdad mayor's office, separated from the Marines by 15 feet of green Persian carpet. In the middle stood a translator, alternately explaining each side's comments.

The first concern is security, Anad said. Each attack on election workers, each car bomb targeting Iraqi Police or National Guard, each kidnapping of a local citizen drives home that message, he said.

Additionally, said Hit Mayor Ali Hamdi, residents of Al Anbar will not vote because they have no local candidates on the ballot.

"There are four opinions of the election here: People will boycott the elections and urge others to do so, people will ignore the elections and not care; people will ask the elections be postponed; or people will threaten anyone who participates or cooperates in any way," Hamdi said.

"If the insurgents continue their activities, we will fight them in the streets of Hit."

Lt. Col. Greg Stevens
1st Battalion, 23rd Marine
Regiment commander

security concerns were keeping them from the area.

Now, with some 100,000 Fallujah and Ramadi residents displaced during the fighting, registration will be even more difficult.

U.S. military officials bristle at those notions, especially in the last case.

"Those who are threatening people need to be identified and arrested," Stevens said. "Or if they resist, they need to be killed."

The prospect of bringing the elections to Al Anbar province has many hurdles, including how to register Iraqis to vote. Even before the U.S. assault on Fallujah, members of the Independent Election Commission of Iraq said security concerns were keeping them from the area.

Now, with some 100,000 Fallujah and Ramadi residents displaced during the fighting, registration will be even more difficult.

To address that, officials said, citizens in Al Anbar will be allowed to register on the day of the vote and can cast their ballot at any polling station in the province, regardless of their hometown.

"The elections are going to occur, and it's harsh to say, but they will occur whether the mayors or the city councils participate in them or not," Stevens said. "I will continue with the process as long as there is one citizen who wants to vote."

Many of those displaced residents have moved to cities such as Hit and Baghdad, both of which lie on the Euphrates River. Over the past four months, U.S. military officials said, they have largely respected the local politicians' requests to keep troops out of Hit.

But with a string of attacks — including the bombing of a new city administration complex built with U.S. reconstruction funds — the U.S. military's "patience is at its end," Stevens said.



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Left: Baghdad Mayor Nassan Anad, left, and Hit Mayor Ali Hamdi listen to Lt. Col. Gary Stevens, commander of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, not shown, as he tells them elections will go ahead as scheduled. Above: A U.S. Marine Corps convoy travels along the road between Hit and Haditha, Iraq. Security in the region will hamper efforts to hold the Jan. 30 national elections, local officials say.

Stevens closed the meeting with a blunt warning to the local officials. Attacks on reconstruction projects and U.S. forces in Hit need to end, he said, or those projects will end and a decidedly more military attitude will be taken.

"I will make it clearly understood to the people that if they, the insurgents who caused that to stop. If the insurgents continue their activities, we will fight them in the streets of Hit," Stevens told Hamdi.

"The blame will not be on the multinational forces. It will be on the Iraqis who stand idly by and do nothing for the security of Al Anbar," Stevens told the officials. "These are difficult times. But nothing good can happen without some measure of difficulty."

"Everything is a choice, and with choices come consequences, good or bad. The attacks need to stop, or there will be severe consequences."

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Bush expresses confidence in Iraqi elections despite violence

By TERENCE HUNT

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush expressed optimism Friday about Iraq's upcoming elections, saying they will be "an incredibly hopeful experience," despite rising violence and doubts that the vote will bring stability and democracy.

"I know it's hard, but it's hard for a reason," Bush said. He acknowledged security problems in

four of Iraq's 18 provinces.

"This is a big moment for the Iraqi people," Bush said in the Oval Office. He spoke after a roadside bomb killed seven U.S. soldiers in Baghdad and two Marines were killed in western Iraq on Thursday.

"These are people who want to try to impose their will on people," the president said. "These are people just like the Taliban, just like Osama bin Laden who have this dim vision of the world

that says: if you do not agree with us, then you're of no account. And they're trying to stop people from voting."

Bush took issue with a gloomy assessment of Iraq's future by Brent Scowcroft, who was chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board under Bush and national security adviser under Bush's father. Scowcroft said in a speech Thursday that the Iraqi elections "have the great potential for deepening the

conflict" and that divisions between Shiite and Sunni Muslims are likely to be increased.

"Quite the opposite," Bush said. "I think elections will be such a credibly hopeful experience for the Iraqi people. Remember these are people that live in a society where if they didn't toe the line of the leadership, they would be tortured or killed or maimed. And all of the sudden a new way of life is being introduced into Iraq." Bush acknowl-

edged that security problems hang over the vote in four of Iraq's 18 provinces. The other provinces "appear to be relatively calm," the president said.

Bush said he discussed the elections recently with Iraqi interim president, Ghazi al-Yawer, a Sunni whose post is mostly symbolic. "I said, 'How's your campaign going,'" Bush said. "He said, 'It's going fine.' He's out there trying to convince people to vote for him."



CAPT. GABRIELLA COOK VIA LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL/AP

A police dog stands between U.S. Army Cpl. Manny Torres, left, and an unidentified Iraqi security officer in Baghdad. Capt. Gabriella Cook of the U.S. Army Reserve's 313th Military Police Detachment, is seeking food donations for Iraq's starving police dogs.

U.S. soldier starts food drive for Iraqi canines

BY KEN RITTER

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Just before the New Year, U.S. Army Reserve Capt. Gabriella Cook sent an urgent e-mail from Iraq requesting food shipments. Not for her or her unit — for Iraqi police dogs.

"The dogs are starving and urgently need dry dog food," Cook wrote in a Dec. 28 e-mail that said the Iraqi Interior Ministry's only bomb-sniffing police dogs were eating table scraps and garbage.

The response to the canine crisis has been overwhelming: Offers of help poured in from New Hampshire, Florida, Texas, Ohio and New York. One sports gambling handicapper alone ponied up \$5,000.

The Las Vegas Valley Humane Society is now trying to find a way to ship pallets of dry dog food to Iraq to feed the 12 undernourished German shepherds and one black Labrador retriever at the Iraqi Police Academy.

The Nevada effort appeared to

be unique, said Stephanie Shain, spokeswoman for the Humane Society of the United States in Washington. She said the national organization was contacting officials on Capitol Hill about Cook's account.

The appeal to help feed the Iraqi dogs also has a human benefit.

After all, having healthy Iraqi bomb-sniffing dogs translates into safer U.S. troops.

"If one dog smells one bomb and saves a platoon's life, it's worth it," said Terry Muratore, a veterinarian who looks after Cook's pets.

Muratore said his telephone started ringing with offers of help after he was first quoted by the Las Vegas Review-Journal about Cook's request to "please send all the dog food you can."

In Baghdad, military spokesman Staff Sgt. Don Dees said the care of Iraqi police dogs was separate from U.S. military working dogs, which he said were well-fed.

Raids nab 43 suspected insurgents in Babil

Soldiers and Marines arrested 43 suspected insurgents in Babil province, Iraq, during a series of raids last weekend, according to a news release from the U.S. Central Command.

The arrests were part of Operation River Walk, a 36-hour cordon-and-search operation focused on Latifiyah, a city along the Euphrates River, the release said. It is part of a larger effort to tame a dangerous region south of Baghdad that has become a haven for insurgents who fled from Fallujah after coalition forces captured the city in November.

Operation River Walk involved soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment as well as Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Besides the arrests, the troops also discovered nine significant weapons caches and destroyed several homemade bombs, the release said.

From staff reports

Retired general called up to review Iraq policy

Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon is sending a retired four-star Army general to Iraq next week to conduct an unusual "open-ended" review of the military's entire Iraq policy, including troop levels, training programs for Iraqi security forces and the strategy for fighting the insurgency, senior Defense Department officials told The New York Times on Thursday.

At a meeting Thursday with his top military and civilian aides, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld instructed that Gen. Gary E.

Luck look at all areas of the operation, identify any weaknesses and report back in a few weeks with a confidential assessment, senior defense officials told the Times.

Luck is the former head of American forces in South Korea and currently a senior adviser to the military's Joint Forces Command. A senior adviser to Gen. Tommy Franks at his war-time headquarters in Qatar during the Iraq campaign in 2003 and knows the operation in Iraq well, Luck will lead a small team of military specialists. The Times reported in its Friday editions.

A principal focus will be to address one of the biggest problems facing the military in Iraq today: how to train Iraqi soldiers and police officers to replace the American troops now securing the country.

Commanders have expressed disappointment in the performance of many of the Iraqi forces.

Top Pentagon spokesman Lawrence D. Rita said Luck's assignment was welcomed by Gen. John Abizaid and Gen. George W. Casey Jr., the two top commanders in the region, the paper reported.

Jury selection final for alleged Abu Ghraib abuse ringleader

By T.A. Badger

The Associated Press

PORT HOOD, Texas — A 10-man jury was seated Friday for the military trial of the soldier prosecutors call the ringleader of the prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison.

Opening statements begin Monday in the court-martial of Spc. Charles Graner, of Uniontown, Pa., the first soldier to be tried in the case.

The jury is made up of four officers and six enlisted men. Two prospective jurors were removed from the panel. Seven jurors must vote guilty for Graner to be convicted on charges that include conspiracy to maltreat Iraqi detainees, assault and declaration of duty.

Col. Allen Batschelet was dismissed after he told the judge, Col. James Pohl, that he was embarrassed as an Army officer after seeing the photos. Batschelet admitted that he had strong views regarding Graner's role in the abuse scandal and that he could not set those views aside as a juror. Lt. Col. Mark Kormos was struck from the panel by prosecutors, with no reason given.

A list of potential witnesses also was made public during the jury selection.

Among them were the four other soldiers who

have reached plea deals after being charged with Abu Ghraib abuses: Pvt. Ivan Frederick, Spc. Megan Ambuhl, Spc. Jeremy Sivits and Spc. Armin Cruz. Frederick, Ambuhl and Sivits were guards at Abu Ghraib, while Cruz was part of a military intelligence unit.

Three other soldiers from the Maryland-based 372nd Military Police Company also face charges in the case.

Among them is Pfc. Lynndee England, who gave birth in October to a child that Army prosecutors claim was fathered by Graner. Charges against her have not yet been formally filed, said Capt. Steven Neill, a spokesman for the prosecution.

On Thursday, prosecutors dropped charges of obstruction of justice, adultery, and two of four assault charges Graner faced.

Neill would not say why they were dropped, only that it was usually done for evidentiary issues or strategic reasons.

Guy Womack, Graner's attorney, said he thinks the charges were dropped because his client was wrongly accused of those counts.

Graner, 36, faces up to 17½ years in a military prison on charges of conspiracy to maltreat detainees, assault and committing indecent acts. He had faced up to 24½ years before the other charges were dropped.

Closing arguments end in case of GI charged in alleged grooming of Iraqi

By Angela K. Brown

The Associated Press

PORT HOOD, Texas — An Army sergeant was within his rights as a platoon leader when he ordered his troops to force two Iraqi cousins into the Tigris River for violating curfew, his attorney said in closing arguments.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Perkins, accused in the alleged drowning death of Zaidoun Fadel Hassoun, 19, is charged with involuntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, obstruction of justice and making a false statement.

Jurors deliberated for four hours Thursday and resumed Friday morning. If convicted, Perkins could receive no punishment or up to 26 years in a military prison.

Defense attorney Capt. Josh Norris said the hostilities in Iraq require soldiers to find effective nonlethal ways to deter crime and establish respect.

"Did these guys cross over the line? Did they know the left and right limits? This war is in this gray area most of the time," Norris said. "Was it (the river incident) a good idea? I don't know ... but was it a crime, considering all the circumstances?"

Prosecutors say Zaidoun Hassoun drowned and his cousin, Marwan Hassoun, climbed out the river. But the defense denies that Zaidoun died. The trial of Army 1st Lt. Jack Saville, the platoon leader, was postponed until March after a judge ordered the

victim's body to be exhumed for an autopsy and identification.

In closing arguments, prosecutor Capt. Tom Schiffer said Perkins gave the orders to dump the men into the water — and therefore shares the blame with soldiers who forced the cousins at gunpoint into the river near Samarra in January 2004.

"We do need to send a message that the U.S. will not tolerate people, bodies thrown and thrown them into bodies of water for no military purpose," Schiffer said.

He said a soldier's testimony that Perkins ordered him to grab another Iraqi man in December 2003 near Balad and toss him into the river showed a pattern of using unlawful military force. Perkins faces a second assault charge in that incident.



BEN MURRAY/Stars and Stripes

Georgiana Ayer, right, presents the clothing she received from retailer Land's End to Chaplain (Col.) Eric Holmstrom at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center on Friday, while her husband, Maj. Philip Ayer unloads more boxes of donated gifts.

Donations to Landstuhl almost through the roof

Surge brings piles of clothes and books to hospital

BY BEN MURRAY

Stars and Stripes

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Signaling the unprecedented amount of gifts for U.S. servicemembers that have inundated military hospitals in the United States and Europe, chaplains at the Army's main hospital in Germany spend their workday literally tripping over donations.

Boxes of movies, books, socks, snacks and letters line the hallways and spill into the chaplains' offices, where they talk almost matter-of-factly about a recent donation of 600 jackets, or another of 2,000 sweat suits.

"Quantity-wise, yeah, it's been a big surge and a big push," said Landstuhl Chaplain (Col.) Eric Holmstrom, who manages most of the incoming donations for servicemembers being treated at the hospital. "We're in the process of looking for more warehouse space."

Holmstrom's office is straining under the weight of the same kind of generosity that last week prompted major military hospitals in the United States to ask people to stop sending gifts for a while, saying they had months' worth of donations to give out and no room to store any more.

Holmstrom said Thursday that Landstuhl has come close to reaching that point, but the chaplains decided not to put a block on incoming gifts for servicemembers.

"I raised that issue and our decision was, 'We

don't want to say no,'" Holmstrom said, though he then added quickly, "That's not an appeal for more planeloads or pallets of things."

Even amid the urgent need for money and relief needed by victims of the tsunami disaster in South Asia, people in early January have continued to heap more onto the Landstuhl pile, Holmstrom said.

One such person is Georgiana Ayer, co-leader of an Army family readiness group in Mannheim, Germany, who showed up at the hospital Friday with several large bags of new clothing from retailer Land's End.

Ayer's story is similar to the thousands of others that have combined to create the logjam of boxes at Landstuhl. After hearing in November that the hospital needed clothes for patients, she pooled some money to buy a few things, and started one that snowballed into a donation from the Land's End clothing company that included sweat shirts and sweat pants, coats, hats and boots, among other items.

"I wasn't expecting anything big," Ayer said. "But I came into the office one day and someone said, 'Oh, we got four giant boxes,'" she said.

Holmstrom said cash donations to the chaplains' office are the easiest thing for the staff to handle these days, though the hospital will take other gifts. Anything extra that doesn't get used at the hospital will eventually find a grateful servicemember somewhere, possibly in Iraq, he said.

"If it's not used here, it goes downrange," he said.

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Firefighters to get two days of real-life training at Sigonella

BY SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

Ain't nothing like the real thing. That's why U.S. contract firefighters from Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan and K2 Air Base in Uzbekistan will spend two days next week on an aircraft, training to extinguish fires.

In March, the Naval Air Station Sigonella, Sicily, received a Mobile Aircraft Firefighting Training Device, in which trainers can set all or parts of the aircraft ablaze with propane gas-fed flames and smoke up the cockpit and cabin.

While not a real airliner, it's an aircraft nonetheless that "allows firefighters to see a three-dimensional fire and fight an actual fire rather than a simulated one," said Sean Edwards, Naval Air Station Sigonella's assistant fire chief.

"They can feel the fire, feel heat, and know what it's like to fight a blaze in (the body of) an aircraft." When stored, the device folds up to look like an 18-wheeler trailer. But when unfolded, it resembles a small-framed aircraft that Edwards likened to a 737 or a C-9.

Built on a 45-foot-long trailer, the training plane is

a fuselage with wings, a tail and three engines on which firefighters can ignite a variety of controlled fires, meant to engulf just the wheels, the cockpit, the engine or the galley. The trailer contains the control box that operates the fires and smoke machine via a propane hose and electrical connections.

Because the fire is controlled, it can immediately be extinguished. Cameras throughout allow controllers to keep an eye on firefighters inside battling flames in temperatures that can reach 1,400 degrees. The plane can be set afire repeatedly without damaging it.

A few months ago, NAS Sigonella began training firefighters from other overseas areas, mainly those in the Southwest Asia bases, Edwards said. On Tuesday, the 12 firefighters from bases in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan will begin the two-day course in Sigonella.

While Sigonella can accommodate up to 30 students per class, the contract firefighters train on a rotating basis so that too many aren't away from their home base at the same time, Edwards said.

"Usually, they can't afford to send a ton at a time because of manpower reasons," he said.

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Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Firefighters enter the fuselage of a Mobile Aircraft Firefighting Training Device at Naval Air Station Sigonella, Sicily. The training aircraft allows controllers to set all or parts of the aircraft ablaze with propane gas-fed flames and to smoke up the cockpit and cabin.

Defense Department still awaiting word on 'concurrent receipt'

Defense officials, as of Thursday, were still awaiting word from the White House's Office of Management and Budget on whether to pay accelerated Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) to 28,000 retirees rated "unemployable" by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

For decades, military retirees who accepted VA disability compensation have seen taxable retired pay reduced by a matching amount. Congress, in recent years, began to relax this ban on "concur-

MILITARY UPDATE
Tom Philpott

rent receipt" for retirees who served full careers and had combat-related injuries or severe disabilities.

In December 2003, lawmakers approved

a 10-year, phase-in plan of full retired pay, in the form of CRDP, for those with disabilities of 50 percent or more. Last October, lawmakers voted to accelerate the schedule for 100-percent disabled, fully restoring their retired pay effective Jan. 1.

Since then, the Bush administration has been studying whether accelerated CRDP must be paid to retirees with disabilities rated below 100 percent if they draw VA compensation at the 100 percent level because their wounds or ailments are so seri-

ous they are deemed unemployable.

Pentagon lawyers believe they must be included. But Defense officials awaited a final OK from OMB before making an announcement and ordering finance centers to increase CRDP sharply for 28,000 retirees. The higher payments, if and when they begin, will be retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005.

To comment, write Military Update, P.O. Box 1111, Fort Belvoir, VA 22061-1111; e-mail milupdate@aol.com or visit www.militaryupdate.com

U.S. troops set up base on notorious Baghdad street

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — U.S. troops have set up a base on Baghdad's notorious Haifa Street hoping to pacify insurgency in one of the capital's most dangerous central districts, the military said Friday.

Paratroopers from Company B of the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Battalion and soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Battalion seized and secured one of the street's vacant buildings last month during an operation dubbed "Field of Dreams," the military said.

"The purpose of the operation

was to fortify the palace so it can be used as a base from which to conduct aggressive operations against the insurgents," said Sgt. Michael Cooper.

The Haifa Street, one of Baghdad's main thoroughfares, was for months a no-go area for Iraqi and U.S. troops.

The U.S. military move appears to be an attempt to pacify the dangerous area.

The operation began on Christmas Eve and went on for several days during which insurgents repeatedly attacked with small-arms fire and mortars, the military said.

In the days after the palace was occupied and U.S. patrols began patrolling the street, the number of attacks on U.S. forces fell off dramatically, the statement said.

In one of the latest attacks by insurgents on the Haifa Street on Dec. 19, pistol-wielding gunmen stopped a car carrying election officials and dragged them into the middle of the street, killing them in cold blood in front of stunned passers-by.

The insurgents have been targeting Iraqi election officials in an attempt to derail national elections scheduled for Jan. 30.

B-1 Lancers back in air

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Air Force's B-1 Lancers are back in the air after being grounded when the front nose gear of a forward-deployed bomber collapsed on Dec. 30.

The aircraft "landed, it taxied [to its parking spot], it shut down the engines, and then it collapsed" when the front nose gear gave way, said spokesman 1st Lt. Ryan Fitzgerald, who is with the Air Combat Command at Langley Air Force Base, Va.

No one was hurt in the incident, Fitzgerald said. Fitzgerald said the Air Force would not publicly release the reason for the collapse until the Air Force's Accident Investigation Board completes its report, a process that takes "several months."

Chaplain Yee honorably discharged

WASHINGTON — U.S. Army Chaplain James Yee, who was imprisoned for more than two months on treason charges that eventually were dropped, received an honorable discharge on Friday, his lawyers said.

Attorney Eugene Fidell said the discharge was scheduled for midnight Friday. "As a West Point graduate, he leaves the Army with great sadness. The fact that he was imprisoned for a prolonged period for no valid reason remains indefensible."

Yee, a Chinese-American and Muslim chaplain, was ministering at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, when he was arrested in September 2003 for allegedly attempting to pass prisoner information and U.S. secrets to al-Qaida.

From staff reports

EUCOM welcomes paperless medical records program

Heidelberg first military hospital in Europe to implement new system

BY BEN MURRAY

Stars and Stripes

The centralized record-keeping system designed to replace servicemembers' and dependents' paper medical files is due to arrive at its first European hospital next month, heralding the start of an electronic evolution in the military health-care system.

Called the Composite Health Care System II, the new program eventually will store all military patients' medical information on a central database in Montgomery, Ala., signaling the final days of the stacks of handwritten documents traditionally carried by servicemembers.

Instead, all new records will be kept as electronic files in CHCS

II, an upgrade that military medical officials this week called a vast improvement to the existing system.

"Once this is done it should have incredible benefits," said Dr. Robert Walker, a physician and the deputy of primary care at the U.S. Army hospital in Heidelberg, Germany, which will be the first in Europe to implement the system. "It's basically putting our foot in the right century."

The benefits include the ability of doctors in military hospitals worldwide to view online a single, up-to-date record for each patient, eliminating duplicate files and preventing doctors from having to "start from scratch" when someone loses their paper record, Walker said.

Plus, the new electronic records will be legible, he said.

"It sounds really simple, but it makes a big difference in patient safety," Walker said.

The implementation of CHCS II is a massive government project that started heating up last year with information technology staff moving the last two years' worth of patients' records from the old system into the new database.

Implementing the software in hospitals requires large numbers

of new computers and printers for staff in the military's expansive medical network, and training for everyone from physicians to administrative staff.

Tina Coffman, CHCS program manager for the Regional Medical Command said Friday that she estimated "Landstuhl [Regional Medical Center] alone is getting 1,000 new pieces of hardware."

Implementation began in January at seven stateside military hospitals, and after Heidelberg it will be installed at Landstuhl before moving on to other central European hospitals. By the end of 2006, the system will span all DOD hospitals and include dental records as well, Coffman said.

"There will be one medical record that will be available worldwide," Coffman said.

But like many medical remedies, CHCS II initially will have to hurt before it can heal, as Coffman and Walker warned that patients will see appointment back-ups starting in February as staff are trained on the new software.

"During implementation phases, some nonessential and simple procedures also may have to be delayed, Walker said, to allow available staff to take care of priority cases.

"We're putting elective things off" at Heidelberg, he said.

And even proponents of the system like Walker and Coffman conceded that CHCS II, like any extensive new computer network, undoubtedly will see its share of bugs and setbacks before it runs smoothly.

"Patients need to be patient with us, if you will," Coffman said.

Coffman also said that while CHCS II does create an electronic file for records dating to August 2002, patients with longer medical histories that date back further will have to hold on to their trusty paper records, so doctors can refer to pre-CHCS II treatments.

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IN THE WORLD

Indonesia raises death toll by 7,000

BY CHRIS BRUMMITT

The Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan described the devastation on tsunami-battered Sumatra island Friday as the worst he's ever seen, and authorities raised Indonesia's death toll by 7,000, bringing the overall total killed by the disaster to more than 147,000.

Twelve days after the tsunami hit, Annan and World Bank President James Wolfensohn flew over the island's west coast and later drove around the shattered coastal town of Meulaboh, where families picked through piles of rubble six feet high.

"I have never seen such utter destruction mile after mile," a shaken Annan told reporters. "You wonder where are the people? What has happened to them?"

Hardest hit was Sumatra, which was closest to the epicenter of the 9.0 magnitude quake, and where officials on Friday counted about 7,000 additional bodies — mostly in Meulaboh, which had been cut off by washed-out roads — increasing Indonesia's toll to 101,318.

India's death toll also rose to 10,001 Friday after officials reported recovery of 301 bodies in the isolated Andaman and Nicobar islands and nine others on India's southern coast.

That raised the overall death toll from the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami to 147,841.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who toured the Thai holiday destination of Phuket on Friday, also said that 391 missing Britons were likely dead. Forty-nine Britons have been confirmed dead.

He called the effort to identify thousands of bodies one of the biggest international forensic operations in history.

For more photos and stories on military relief operations, visit www.stripes.com

Indonesian military spokesman Ahmad Yani Basuki said the sharp increase was largely due to volunteers helping to recover bodies. "There was an incredible spike in the death toll," Basuki said. "A good deal of it was from Meulaboh."

With tens of thousands still missing and threatened by disease from the powerful waves that hit 11 nations, the United Nations said the death toll would keep climbing.

"I think we have to be aware that very, very many of the victims have been swept away and many, many will not reappear," U.N. humanitarian chief Jan Egeland said in New York. "The 150,000 dead figure is a very low figure. It will be much bigger."

Security concerns for foreign aid workers emerged. The South Korean government asked its aid workers, some of them affiliated with Christian groups, not to engage in religious activities that could provoke Islamic radicals.

Also, in an apparent sign that American relief agencies want to keep a lower profile, several trucks delivering supplies from U.S. AID removed large banners marking the source of the shipments.

Japan ordered nearly 900 troops to help with relief efforts, instructing ground and naval forces to leave next week for Indonesia and Thailand. Tokyo already has deployed three ships, 40 air force personnel and several teams of medical, rescue and forensic experts.



United States Navy helicopter crews begin another day of relief operations from the USS Abraham Lincoln off the western coast of the Indonesian province of Aceh. Relief operations continued for the province devastated by the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami wave.

Annan's visit came after he attended a summit of world leaders in Jakarta on Thursday on how to turn one of history's largest-ever aid packages — nearly \$4 billion in pledges — into food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless.

Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in Sri Lanka, where more than 30,000 people died, to inspect tsunami-devastated areas in the south and hold talks on relief efforts.

"I had a chance to witness the

devastation firsthand, and by seeing it on the ground can you really appreciate what it must have been like on that terrible day," he said.

While some areas in Thailand remained scenes of total devastation, other Thai resorts were looking to the future. Cleanup on several beaches was almost complete and tour operators were eager to get back to business.

In Indonesia, some aid officials were reviewing security precau-

tions after the arrival of some 80 members of a radical Islamic group. The group, Laskar Mujahidin, accused of taking part in Muslim-Christian fighting in another part of Indonesia between 1999 and 2001, has set up a relief camp — but said it was only there to help.

"We are not here to fight, we've come to help. We've got no problem with the foreigners as long as they have no hidden agenda," said group leader Salman Alfarizi.

U.S. to evaluate long-range relief efforts

LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — With emergency aid to tsunami victims largely in place, U.S. commanders will spend the next several days planning their long-range goals, according to the leader of the military relief effort.

"We are at a point, I believe, where we are able now to see the top of the crisis curve," Marine Lt. Gen. Robert R. Blackman told Pentagon reporters Friday.

Speaking by telephone from Utapao, Thailand, where his Combined Support Force 536 is based, Blackman said that "the priority over the next 96 hours is to determine what our sustained requirements will be for this disaster relief on each of the three countries where we are focusing our efforts," — Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

However, it is still too early to get a sense of how long it will take before the U.S. military can begin considering drawing back any of the personnel or capabilities tapped for the relief efforts, Blackman said.

"We will conduct operations here as long as it takes in order to accomplish our mission of minimizing further loss of life and mitigating human suffering," Blackwell said. "We will not stay any longer than necessary."

Now the U.S. military's job is to figure out how best to support the countries most hard-hit by the Dec. 26 earthquake and subsequent tsunamis in the long term, Blackman said.

"The challenge now that we're able to better see the top of the curve," Blackman said, "is to match up our existing capabilities here in each of these unique locations."

Only once the individual nations, the United Nations, and international aid agencies "are in a position to sustain the necessary relief" will Blackman make the recommendation that he begin to incrementally reduce our "military" capabilities in the effort. And that timetable, Blackman said, "will be different in each [country] of Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka."

U.S. forces can expect to be involved in the tsunami relief efforts "for some time," Blackman said.

For example, the USNS Mercy hospital ship, which was dispatched to the region earlier this week, will not even arrive on-station for another 30 days, Blackwell confirmed.

With more than 13,000 U.S. military personnel now in the region and working to relieve devastation and human suffering on a "truly historic," scale, U.S. military commanders are offering these servicemen's mental health counseling, and that "earlier, rather than later," Blackman said.

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Saudis raise \$84M in telethon

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — School children donated pocket money and King Fahd gave millions as Saudis raised \$84 million for the tsunami victims in a state-organized telethon that ended Friday.

The donation drive came as the oil-rich kingdom fended off accusations that it was not doing enough for the South Asian disaster, which has killed more than 147,000 people.

Many offer to adopt Asian orphans

BERLIN — Adoption expert Maria Holz usually gets two or three e-mails a day asking about children in need abroad. Since the Asian tsunami, it's been 10 times that.

She respects people's urge to help children who have lost their parents in the disaster but warns it's too early to know which children truly lack people who can raise them in their home country.

Donations can be claimed on 2004 taxes

WASHINGTON — Taxpayers making donations this month to aid the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami will be able to claim deductions on their 2004 tax returns under legislation passed by Congress Thursday.

The bill sent to President Bush was aimed at encouraging private donations to the tsunami relief effort. Under current law, taxpayers would have had to wait until next year to claim a tax deduction for contributions made in January this year.

It passed both the House and Senate by voice vote.

From The Associated Press

Getting relief to the victims

USAID teams help military deliver

BY FRED ZIMMERMAN
Stars and Stripes

UTAPAO, Thailand — With the United States pledging more than \$50 million to tsunami relief efforts, various organizations are on the ground here to ensure the aid gets to where it needs to be.

To help in that effort, the U.S.



Issacs

Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance has embedded personnel with the U.S. military here. Much like the military, OFDA has teams that assess damage and situations when disasters strike anywhere in the world, according to Roberta Rossi, USAID spokeswoman. The teams help coordinate relief operations with nongovernmental agencies, the military and international agencies. There currently are about 40 team members on the ground in the region, each a specialist in a certain field — water and sanitation, for example.

As of Thursday, OFDA had committed more than \$36 million in humanitarian assistance, according to its Web site, www.usaid.gov. Everything from water and sanitation to health care and shelter are being provided by OFDA in certain regions of South Asia.

Rossi said the organization has warehouses located throughout the world stockpiled with relief

supplies just waiting to be used. Having those supplies pre-positioned helped OFDA get them here quickly. The most urgent supplies needed in most areas, she said, are plastic sheeting for shelter and water filtration systems.

Getting the relief out is where the U.S. military comes in. Rossi said OFDA is getting the supplies to the region, and the military is using C-130s to fly the aid to distribution locations.

Often one of the first aid organizations on the ground, OFDA resembles one of the U.S. military services, according to Ken Issacs, OFDA director.

"OFDA could be compared to the Marine Corps," Issacs said. "We're often the first to respond to disaster and crises around the world."

A close working relationship between OFDA and the military is typical during humanitarian relief operations, said Army Col. Doug Wallace, a civil affairs officer currently with Combined Support Force 536. While OFDA can bring expertise and supplies to the table, the U.S. military has "depth of staff, and planning, logistical and communications capabilities" to offer, Wallace said.

"We don't have the logistics or manpower capacity, but we have the expertise," Issacs said.

Wallace said that just three weeks prior to the tsunami, members of OFDA helped Pacific Command headquarters on how the organization operates. Now, he said, that recent information-sharing has made operations here between the two run smoother.

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JIM SCHULZ/Stars and Stripes

Workers in the Colombo, Sri Lanka, airport Friday process supplies. People and equipment from an alliance of global companies are helping U.S. Marines at the airport organize and move incoming relief aid.

Private firms help organize aid

BY JULIANA GITTER
Stars and Stripes

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — As U.S. military forces plug ahead with a relief plan in tsunami-ravaged Sri Lanka, a collaboration of private companies set up after another devastating natural disaster is helping ensure tons of aid relief is moving in and out of the main airport smoothly.

After a deadly earthquake on Dec. 26, 2003, in Bam, Iran, shipping giant DHL began transporting planes of aid to the local airport there. Supplies quickly backed up.

"We decided to put a team together instead of donating more planes and adding to the chaos," said Chris Weeks, a DHL employee who heads the Airport Emergency Team at the Colombo airport.

DHL and several other companies from around the world formed the Disaster Resource Network, an organization that would, in times of crisis, move in and help with logistics, transportation and communications. In Sri Lanka, the Airport Emergency

Team coordinates and processes tons of incoming supplies.

As aid arrives, a team of 12 assisted by local workers moves it, organizes it, processes it and sends it out on military and civilian aircraft, Weeks said.

The system utilizes the business practices of its member companies and brings in skilled laborers such as forklift operators. It's safer and more efficient than disaster relief operations of the past, Weeks said. The key, he adds, is arriving quickly, before operations can back up.

In the first week, the team moved 2,600 tons of aid from 47 countries. Much of it goes out in U.S. Air Force Pave Hawk helicopters and Canadian and American military cargo planes, while some is transported by Sri Lankan government agencies and nongovernmental agencies, Weeks said.

U.S. Marines conducting logistics and airport control operations at the airport, from the Combined Logistics Control Center, assist the Airport Emergency Team with lifting, among other tasks, as they wait for their full-scale relief operations to begin.

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Tsunami relief: Rappers, choirs, punk bands all take new theme

BY JAMEY KEATEN
The Associated Press

PARIS — Hip-hop rhytms, classical orchestras, church choirs, punk bands and creamy-voiced crooners from Paris to Hong Kong are taking up the fund-raising theme for victims of the Asian tsunami, holding money-raising concerts and singing special songs.

Ever since the 1980s African famine relief hit "We Are the World" and its Band Aid predecessor "Do They Know It's

Christmas?" support from musicians has been part of charity fund-raising.

But the response to the tsunami has been huge.

In Norway, dozens of benefit concerts are planned. In its capital, Stavanger, groups scheduled a free show Thursday, with cash to be raised through the sale of a single entitled "The Time is Now."

"It's about solidarity with people," popular Norwegian bluesman Reidar Larsen told reporters. "If you have the chance to help people in need, most will turn out,

whether auto mechanics or artists."

Hong Kong heartthrob Nicholas Tse sang the popular tune "Chinese People" to a nearly full house of about 6,000 people who waved glow sticks, clapped and sang along at a charity concert on Thursday at the Workers' Gymnasium in Beijing.

Also on Thursday, top Finnish rock stars held a fund-raising concert at one of Helsinki's most popular halls, collecting money for the Red Cross crisis fund.

In the United States, singer Willie Nelson agreed to headline a benefit concert

Sunday in Austin, Texas. The "Tsunami Relief Austin to South Asia" concert will include performances by Patty Griffin, Spoon, Joe Ely, Alejandro Escovedo, Bruce Sison and Kelly Willis.

In Britain, longtime DJ Mike Read said he lined up Band Aid veteran Boy George and pop musician Cliff Richard to record a benefit version of Read's "Grief Never Grows Old."

Others gave without performing. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra said it will donate \$136,000 to the World Health Organization to help provide drinking water.

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Train collision in northern Italy kills 14

By PAOLO FERRARI

The Associated Press

BOLOGNINA DI CREVALCORE, Italy — A passenger train and a freight train collided in thick fog Friday in northern Italy, killing 14 people and injuring dozens, rescue officials said.

The crash, on a line between Bologna and Verona, left several train cars in a wreck of buckled metal. At least one carriage was lifted high into the air by the force of the collision.

The crash happened at 12:50 p.m. in a rural area of Bolognina di Crevalcore, 25 miles north of Bologna.

Workers pulled bodies from the wreckage and laid them in body bags in a misty field. Eight bodies had been recovered, according to police in the nearby town of San Giovanni in Persiceto, who were



overseeing the efforts.

Rescue officials in Rome said 14 people were killed and 80 injured, several seriously.

The Civil Defense department said around 100 people were on

board the passenger train, which was a local train traveling south from Verona to Bologna. The freighter was headed north from Rome to San Zeno Falzano.

The cause of the crash was not known, but officials said there was thick fog at the time of the collision. The Transport Ministry said it was opening an investigation.

A helicopter was sent from Rome. The ANSA news agency reported, while several ambulances rushed to the scene.

Several seriously injured people were taken to a hospital in Bologna, and about 50 people were being treated on-site for minor injuries, the report said.

Italy has few deadly train crashes, but a train from Palermo to Messina derailed in northeastern Sicily, killing at least eight people in July 2002.



Firefighters work on the wreckage of a passenger train that collided with a freight train in Bolognina di Crevalcore, Italy, on Friday. AP

10 alleged Mexican gang members sentenced in killings of 12 women

By MARINA MONTENAYOR

The Associated Press

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico — Ten alleged gang members were convicted in the killings of 12 women, some of the hundreds who have been found slain in this border city in recent years.

Four bus drivers, all thought to be loyal to a criminal gang known as "Los Totecas," were sentenced Thursday to between 40 and 113 years in prison for premeditated homicide, aggravated rape and criminal association in the slayings of six Ciudad Juarez women.

In a verdict delivered by a different judge, six members of an-

other gang, "Los Rebeldes," received between 24 and 40 years in prison for similar convictions in the deaths of six other women, said Rene Medrano, a spokesman for the state attorney general's office in Chihuahua, which includes Juarez.

The Los Totecas members were arrested in 1999, after the reputed leader of their group, Jesus Manuel Guardado, alias "El Totale," was identified by a 14-year-old girl as the man who sexually assaulted and tried to kill her.

Guardado, whose nickname comes from inhabitants of an ancient civilization that predates the Spanish conquest, received 113 years in prison, while the other

four were sentenced to 40 years. Under Mexican law, 40 years is the longest any inmate can be held behind bars.

One other alleged member of the group was found not guilty and released, Medrano said.

According to government tallies, more than 300 women have been killed in this city across from El Paso, Texas, since 1993, though human rights leaders say the number is much higher.

At least 100 of those slayings appear to fit a pattern where a young, slender woman was sexually abused, strangled, and dumped in the desert outside Juarez.

Many of those cases remain unsolved and only two men have been convicted for nine of the slayings.



An Indian paramilitary soldier jumps out of the window of an income tax office building Friday after it was attacked and set ablaze by suspected militants in Srinagar, India. AP

4 killed in militant attack on Kashmir government office

The Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India — Militants stormed a government building in Indian-controlled Kashmir on Friday, setting it on fire with about 70 employees trapped inside, police said. At least four people, including two attackers, were killed.

Three militants made their way into the building housing the income tax office in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu-Kashmir state, hurling a hand grenade that began the blaze, a police officer said on condition of anonymity.

A soldier, a civilian and two militants were killed, said K. Srinivasan, a senior officer of the paramilitary Border Security Force. Four soldiers were wounded.

Paramilitary soldiers surrounded the burning building and

helped evacuate most of the civilians inside, he said. TV footage showed a stream of shaken employees clambering down from the second floor on ladders set up by rescue crews.

One of the employees evacuated, identified as Noor-ul-din, said two co-workers were still missing, Srinivasan said.

Militants holed up inside the building kept firing at soldiers outside, he said. Firefighters managed to extinguish the flames, which gutted the building's third floor, paramilitary spokesman Manoj Kumar said.

The three-hour ordeal ended when the paramilitary troops stormed the building, searching through the rubble for the militants and any other survivors. Several explosions went off while they were inside.

Study: Shepherds' whistling forms language

By BRYN NELSON

Newsday

Spanish shepherds who communicate by whistling while they work rely on brain regions normally linked to spoken languages, a new study has found.

The results, researchers say, point to the extraordinary plasticity of the brain in determining what constitutes a language.

"The brain is probably a much more flexible organ than we had previously assumed, in its ability to adapt to these other communi-

cative signals," said David Corina, a study co-author and a professor of psychology at the University of Washington in Seattle. "It also just makes us appreciate the range of communication forms that are out there."

On the mountainous island of La Gomera in Spain's Canary Islands, a small group of residents still use a language originally developed by shepherds, called Silbo Gomero, that substitutes whistles for words.

A study published Thursday in the journal *Nature* suggests

that the left brain area associated with processing spoken and sign languages lights up among proficient whistlers, but not among those who don't understand what the whistles mean.

Proficient whistlers, or Silboadores, vary the pitch and length of their whistles to denote one of four consonants or two vowels in a system comparable to Morse code or an African drum language. Combining whistles to form sentences — "John milked the goats," for example — has allowed La Gomera residents to communicate at distances of up to a half mile.

Man escapes boar in wild chase

WARSAW, Poland — A man escaped unscathed after a boar chased him around a hospital parking lot in southwestern Poland, the hospital spokesman said Thursday.

Cameras monitoring hospital grounds in the city of Legnica captured a boar who approached the hospital's main entrance and then crossed the path of an unidentified man before dawn on Wednesday.

When the man tried to flee, the boar pursued him around a parked car for a few minutes until it apparently got bored, Rafal Pilch told The Associated Press.

"The man was taken by surprise and after a moment of consternation started to run," Pilch said. "The boar ran after him and chased him for a few minutes around a parked car and then left."

The man did not need hospital treatment.

From The Associated Press

IN THE STATES

CIA report blames Tenet, Pavitt for pre-9/11 failings

BY GREG MILLER
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — A classified internal CIA investigation singles out former CIA director George J. Tenet and the former head of the agency's clandestine service for failing to devote adequate resources to fighting the terrorist threat before the Sept. 11 attacks, according to intelligence officials who have read the report.

The report by the CIA's Inspector General's Office lays significant blame at the feet of Tenet but goes further in its criticism of James L. Pavitt, the former deputy director of operations, recommending that the agency convene a special panel to determine whether Pavitt should be sanctioned.

The report and its recommendations represent the first time that the CIA has moved to hold any of its employees or senior officials accountable for failures surrounding the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Tenet and Pavitt both left the agency last summer. Pavitt and a spokesman for Tenet denounced the report and rejected its conclusions, saying the two intelligence officials had fought vigorously throughout their tenures to secure more resources to fighting terrorism.

On Dec. 14, President Bush awarded Tenet the Presidential Medal of Freedom, calling him "one of the first to recognize and address the growing threat to America from radical terrorist networks."

Tenet's spokesman, Bill Harlow, called the criticism of the former CIA director "absurd." "No one in the U.S. government was more aggressive in calling attention to and dealing with the threat of terrorism prior to 9/11 than was George Tenet," Harlow

said in an e-mail to the Los Angeles Times. "He is confident that a fair reading of his record during this period would show that senior CIA officials were the most aggressive, resourceful and committed U.S. combatants in the war on terror at the time."

Pavitt, in a telephone interview, called the report "offensive."

"The basic criticism is that it was a failure on my part and others to get appropriate resources to those parts of the organization that needed them," Pavitt said.

"I don't think it is an accurate portrayal of what the facts were at the time," Pavitt said. "Claiming George and I or others didn't put resources in the right place — they can make the claim, make the charge and try to substantiate it. But the fact is nobody lied more forcefully for dollars than I did."

A CIA spokesman declined to comment on the report, which is still considered to be in draft form.

The investigation, by CIA Inspector General John Helgerson, was conducted in response to a request in December 2002 from a joint congressional inquiry that the CIA determine whether and to what extent its employees were at fault for a series of breakdowns in the months before the terrorist strikes.



Tenet

Klan member pleads innocent in '64 Miss. civil rights slayings

BY SHELIA BYRD
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA, Miss. — Reputed Ku Klux Klan member Edgar Ray Killen responded loudly by "not guilty" three times Friday as he was arraigned on murder charges in the slayings of three civil rights workers more than 40 years ago.

Killen, handcuffed and dressed in a loosely fitting orange jail jumpsuit, lowered his voice when asked if he could afford an attorney. He was then led off to the Neshoba County Jail pending another hearing Wednesday. He was ordered held without bond until then.

Killen, 79, was arrested Thursday in the 1964 shooting deaths of James Chaney, a 21-year-old black Mississippi, and two white New Yorkers, Andrew Goodman, 20, and Michael Schwerner, 24. It was the first time the state has sought criminal charges in the case that outraged a nation.

At the hearing, the suspect told Circuit Judge Marcus Gordon he couldn't afford a lawyer but did own some land. Gordon said he would appoint an attorney.

Soon after Killen's arraignment, the courthouse was

cleared by authorities who said they had received a bomb threat. Nothing suspicious was found, they said later.

Rep. John Lewis, the black Georgia congressman who knew the three slain men, hailed the arrest Friday, telling NBC's "Today" that it was "a tremendous step down a very long road."

In 1967, the Justice Department tried Killen and 18 other men — many of them also Klan members — on federal civil rights violations. Seven were convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to 10 years. Killen was freed after his trial ended in a hung jury.

Sheriff Larry Myers said Friday that the Killen indictment was the only one he had received related to the Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner slayings. He said any information about possible additional indictments in the case would have to come from prosecutors, who have declined to comment.



Killen

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Chemicals leak from the tanks of a derailed train in Graniteville, S.C., on Thursday. A Norfolk Southern freight train carrying chlorine gas struck a parked train early Thursday, killing two people and injuring at least 180 other people, authorities said.

Toxic gas from train wreck kills 8

The Associated Press

GRANITEVILLE, S.C. — The air in Graniteville remained too dangerous for people to breathe Friday morning, 24 hours after a Norfolk Southern train carrying chlorine gas crashed into a parked train near an Avondale Mills Inc. plant.

About 75 people found shelter at the University of South Carolina-Aiken on Thursday night, and shelter operators said the displaced residents were planning for a three-day stay.

More than 240 people sought treatment for respiratory and other ailments, and authorities said late Thursday that about 45 were admitted to hospitals.

Five victims, all men, were found at a mill near the wreck.

Another man died in a vehicle, and one died in his home. The engineer of the moving train died at a hospital.

Autopsies were planned, but authorities said all appeared to die from inhaling the chlorine gas.

The wreck is the second in two months in the small textile mill town near the Georgia state line. In November, five people were killed when their car was hit by a train at a rail crossing.

The toxic gas kept investigators from reaching the site and officials don't know how the two trains ended up on the same track. National Transportation Safety Board spokesman Keith Holloway said.

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Anaconda does fight back

The soldier who wrote "LISA Anaconda must get tougher" (letter, Dec. 14) obviously has no idea what is going on with the counterforce fight here on Logistics Support Area Anaconda.

We shoot counterforce in response to a may indirect attacks as we can, using mortars or artillery. When the use of mortars or artillery is not possible, we send air or ground assets to the point of origin. If he wants more details concerning the counterforce fight, I work in the operations center where we currently conduct the counterforce, and he's welcome to come and talk to me personally.

Also, when it comes to the siren, and the soldier's claim that it has no possibility of preventing further casualties, I would like to remind him of the soldiers who died at the post exchange this past summer when an incoming round came several minutes after the post was already at red status.

That instance is one of many where additional rounds have come in after the post has already been at red status. Therefore, for your own safety, it has been decided that you will seek cover and don your protective equipment. If you choose to disagree with this order, the newspaper is not the place to bring it up, your chain of command is.

Unless you have mission-essential tasks to complete, it is best to simply take such simple precautionary measures. I know that I would hate for my loved ones to find out I died because I wanted to sit around and disobey orders to take cover when we had an incoming attack.

Spec. Ross Hedlund

Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq

Washington didn't say it

I am writing to correct a factual error in "Column won't be printed" (letter, Dec. 15).

I am not knocking the writer's veracity or the quality of his ideas. He quotes George Washington's farewell address, saying "George Washington said, 'True re-

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ligion affords government its surest support. The future of this nation depends on the Christian training of our youth. It is impossible to govern without the Bible."

As a history buff, I found this out of sorts with what I know of Washington, so I looked it up. This quote appears nowhere in the address. You are free to reference it yourself. But it is a misquote or a fabrication.

If one were to do a search on the Internet for this phrase, one could conclude that there is a serious disinformation campaign running that feeds the religious fervor of those who wish to think that this country is established on the Bible. As much as I wish that this country would hold more dear the tenets of the New Testament, I cannot in good faith forward their argument, especially when those who advance it misquote the quotes.

One would be well-served to read Washington's address, as it continues to be pertinent today.

David McKinney

Doraville, Ga.

Band shows commitment, spirit

Until about a month ago, I knew precious little about music. I didn't know, for

example, that saxophone reeds and clarinet reeds were different, or that an above has two reeds. I thought I knew what a tuba was, but what I thought was a tuba is actually a Sousaphone, named after the great Marine band leader John Philip Sousa. How did I come into all this knowledge, learning so much so quickly? The answer is simple — being a part of the Warrior Band of H.H. Arnold High School in Wiesbaden, Germany.

But all this knowledge isn't so great — the Warrior Band taught me something richer.

Consider their commitment to our community. Sixty of our young people gave up a school holiday to play for the 1st Armored Division welcome-home ceremony. They even earned recognition from Maj. Gen. Martin Dempsey. They performed at an exchange program at Heinrich von Brentano school in Hochheim, broadening our friendship with our German hosts. Several of our musicians played in their rock band for these students. On Dec. 3, they entertained at the Wiesbaden Army Airfield free-lighting ceremony.

Consider their team spirit. They played for every home football game, and packed into two buses, which either they or their parents paid for, to cheer our football team on to a championship. Everyone was a volunteer — none was required to be there. They played until the last touchdown, even with frozen fingers. (Another lesson about music — to play an instrument, you have to cut the fingers off your gloves.) They wanted to support our school and, with their enthusiasm, they helped us achieve a great victory.

Our Warrior Band is about 60 young, highly talented musicians, offering their gifts to make our community and our school a better place. If all were as committed to our community and school, what do you think we could accomplish?

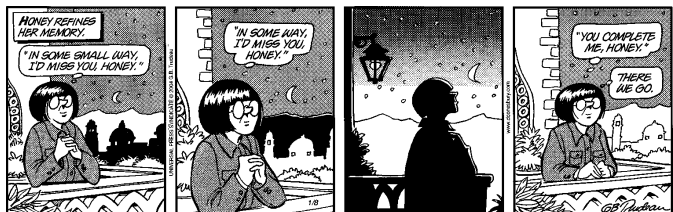
When you hear "warrior," or "soldier," remember how much it takes to put all this together, and how many hours of practice people invest. Thanks, Sgt. Fedric, and your band, for a great fall!

Robert Lyons

Wiesbaden, Germany

By GARRY TRUDEAU

Doonesbury Flashbacks



Mallard Fillmore



By BRUCE TINSLEY

AND LOSING
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 (THOUGH WE'LL
 PROBABLY DO IT
 NO LESS.)

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Bush meets with tax reform panel

Asks senators to simplify code and encourage growth

BY JENNIFER LOVEN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Friday called streamlining and reforming the U.S. tax code an "essential task for our country," but offered few hints of how he intends to get it done.

Treasury Secretary John Snow said "everything's on the table," including possibly the popular home mortgage and charitable deductions and a former senator leading a tax-reform panel for Bush said that a national sales tax or flat tax also could be in the cards.

"I am firm in my desire to get something done," Bush said at the end of a White House meeting with former Sen. Connie Mack, R-Fla., and John Breaux, D-La., the leaders of a nine-member panel the president appointed Friday to recommend reforms to the tax code.

"A simple code will make it easier on the taxpayers," Bush said. "But it's an important task in order to make sure the economic growth we are seeing in the United States continues forward. ... It seems like to me the tax code today discourages economic vitality and growth when you spend billions of hours filling out the forms."

Snow, talking to reporters later outside the White House, said the panel has been ordered "to take a hard look at everything."

Asked if that includes the home-mortgage and charitable deductions that millions of Americans use to reduce their federal tax liabilities, Snow gave no solid assurance that either would be kept. He merely noted that the panel has been told to "give due consideration to the importance of charitable deduction and the home mortgage deduction."

The key question facing the panel is whether to accomplish reforms through changes to the existing tax code, or by scrapping it and moving to either a flat-tax or national sales tax system.

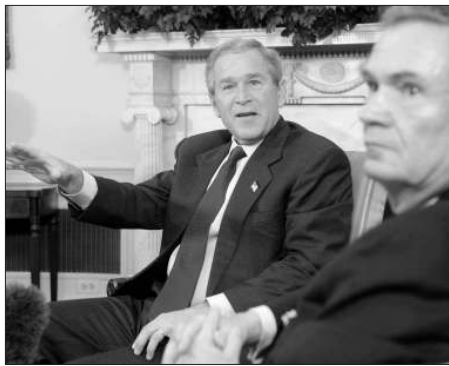
"I think it could be addressed in any of those," Mack said.

Mack and Breaux insisted that Bush had not given them any specific marching orders or tried to send them in any particular direction.

The president was pretty clear in his comments with us — that we have great latitude, there is no end result that he was trying to lead to, other than the fact that he said, you know, this is got to be simpler. ... The other objective they asked us to keep in mind is that it should be pro-growth, it should create greater opportunities for job creation," Mack said.

But though both former senators emphasized an open process that will draw in citizens and experts from around the country as they craft recommendations for a tax code overhaul, Snow made clear that the White House will have its hands in the effort the whole way.

The panel is to deliver its report to the Treasury Department by July 31.

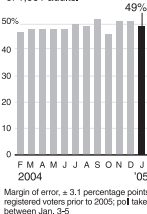


President Bush speaks with reporters Friday in the Oval Office of the White House after he met with members of the President's Panel on Federal Tax Reform. At right is vice chairman of the panel Sen. John Breaux, D-La.

AP-IPSSOS POLL

Presidential approval rating

President Bush's overall job approval rating from a survey of 1,001 adults.



SOURCE: Ipsos-Public Affairs for AP

Public ambivalent in opinion of Bush

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The American public is deeply ambivalent about President Bush as he begins his second term and his approval rating is lower than any recent two-term presidents, a troubling sign for his ambitious agenda, an Associated Press poll found.

Bush's approval rating is at 49 percent in the AP poll, with 49 percent disapproving. His job approval is in the high 40s in several other recent polls — as low as any job approval rating for a re-elected president at the start of the second term in more than 50 years.

Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton had job approval ratings near 60 percent just before their inauguration for a second term, according to Gallup polls.

Bush and Congress are about to tackle ambitious projects — creating private accounts for those in the Social Security system, overhauling the federal tax code and limiting lawsuit damages.

Those tasks will be all the more difficult with the tepid poll ratings for both Bush and Congress.

Specter: Gonzales should be approved

BY MARK SHERMAN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee said Friday he feels certain that Alberto Gonzales will be confirmed as attorney general despite concerns about his role in a Bush administration legal doctrine that critics said undermined prisoner-of-war protections and a law against torture.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter said the nominee's defense of his role in revising torture policy was "not entirely satisfactory" but predicted that would not derail his confirmation.

"It's my sense that he'll have an overwhelming vote," Specter, a Republican, told NBC's "Today" show.

A committee Democrat, who said his own vote was still undecided, agreed with that prediction.

"There's a lower standard, frankly, for attorney general than for judge, because you give the president who he wants," said Sen. Charles Schumer, a Democrat who was also appearing on "Today."

Through more than seven hours of testimony Thursday, Gonzales denied that his advice to President Bush led to abuse of prisoners in U.S. custody, and he condemned torture as an interrogation tactic.

Gonzales betrayed little emotion and at times gave lawyerly answers to pointed questions from

human rights groups and in Congress, but neither he nor he said anything at his confirmation hearing that might damage his prospects of becoming the nation's first Hispanic attorney general.

Specter said his friendship with the president, whom he serves as White House counsel, would not affect his performance as attorney general.

Gonzales denied that any of the memos he wrote or reviewed in the White House had anything to do with the abuse.



Gonzales

Electoral flap sets Congress tone

WASHINGTON — A Democratic effort to highlight Ohio's Election Day voting troubles did not upset President Bush's official re-election, but did spark bitter squabbling that started the new Congress on a sharply partisan tone.

In a quadrennial joint session brimming with tradition, the House and Senate on Thursday affirmed Bush's victory 286-251 over Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass.

Democrats said their goal was to publicize the voting problems, not reverse the voting results. To achieve that, during the state-by-state examination of voting documents — in alphabetical order — Sen. Blaine Boxer, D-Calif., and Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones, D-Ohio, protested when Ohio's papers were drawn from the ceremonial mahogany box.

Understanding that, after the challenge forced the House and Senate to convene separately to consider the Ohio problems, the House rejected the protest by 267-31. The Senate vote was 74-1, with Boxer the only one in support.

Senate debate took just over an hour, while the House — including an unusually long roll call — used almost three more.

From The Associated Press

Yates not likely to be freed despite ruling

BY MICHAEL GRACZYK

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — The mother whose convictions in her children's drownings were tossed over false witness testimony is unlikely to see freedom soon, her lawyers said. The expert witness, meanwhile, said Friday he made an honest mistake and contended he got the erroneous information during a "passing conversation" with prosecutors.

Defense attorney George Parnham said he had no plans to seek Andrea Yates' release from the state prison.

A state appeals court on Thursday determined that the false testimony from forensic psychiatrist Park Dietz led to her improper conviction in three of the five children's drownings in 2001.

During trial, Dietz, a consultant for the television program "Law & Order," described what he said was a show about a

woman found innocent by reason of insanity for drowning her children. The three-judge appellate panel said prosecutors "connected the dots" with that false testimony to convince jurors that Yates patterned her actions after the episode, which turned out not to exist.

Dietz told "Good Morning America" on Friday said he got convinced because prosecutors had told him there was a "Law & Order" episode with that plot.

"I believed they thought I would check it out and determine if it was true," he said. He said he hadn't done so because he didn't think Yates had acted because of a TV show.



Dietz

Judge drops charges against accused spy

BY LINDA DEUTSCH

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A federal judge dismissed all charges against a former FBI informant accused of being a Chinese double agent, saying federal prosecutors engaged in deliberate misconduct in the case.

U.S. District Judge Florence Marie Cooper on Thursday said

the government blocked Katrina Leung's access to a critical defense witness — retired FBI agent James J. Smith, who for years was Leung's lover.

Leung, a wealthy socialite from the Los Angeles suburb of San Marino, allegedly took classified documents from Smith's briefcase. She was not accused of transmitting them to China.

The judge said prosecutors pur-

posely kept defense attorneys from contacting Smith as they prepared for Leung's trial. In doing so, Cooper said, prosecutors violated Leung's due process rights.

Smith was the longtime FBI "handler" for Leung, a naturalized U.S. citizen who was recruited 20 years ago to work for the FBI by gathering intelligence during her frequent business trips to China.

Prosecutors claim she began working for China around 1990.

Smith has pleaded guilty to a single count of making a false statement about the affair and agreed to cooperate with the government. He had been accused of mishandling classified material and allowing it to fall into Leung's hands.

U.S. attorney's spokesman Thom Mrozek said prosecutors

strongly disagree with the ruling but had not decided how to respond.

"While litigating this motion we argued the government did not prohibit Mr. Smith from speaking to Ms. Leung's attorneys if he chose to do so," he said.

The government could drop the case, ask Cooper to reconsider or take the issue to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Study: Extra gene copies help protect people from AIDS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Having extra copies of a gene that produces a blocking protein helps protect people from AIDS, a finding that may explain why some people are more susceptible to the disease than others, a new study reports.

Researchers wondering why people from the same ancestry varied in their ability to resist HIV and AIDS found differences in the number of copies of the gene that encodes CCL3L1, a protein that blocks HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Researchers hope the finding, reported in Thursday's online issue of the journal Science, helps them identify people who have a higher or lower susceptibility to the disease.

"Individual risk of acquiring HIV and experiencing rapid disease progression is not uniform within populations," said Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which funded the study.

"This important study identifies genetic factors of particular groups that either mitigate or enhance one's susceptibility to infection and disease onset," Fauci said in a statement.

The study looked at more than 4,300 blood samples from people of different ancestral origins to determine the average number of CCL3L1 gene copies in each group.

In addition to NIAID the research was supported by National Institute of Mental Health, the Veterans Administration Center for AIDS and HIV-1 Infection, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation and the Burroughs Wellcome Fund.

NASA preparing to resume shuttle flights



Workers at NASA's New Orleans facility move the redesigned shuttle fuel tank to a barge that transported it to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Dec. 31. The redesigned fuel tank, a massive vessel that supplies propellant for the launch of the space shuttle, completed its 900-mile trip to Florida on Thursday.

AP

Public polls often fail at forecasting future

BY WILL LESTER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The American public has a pretty cloudy crystal ball.

Polls were never intended to predict the future — and that's probably a good thing, given their limited success at forecasting.

While the American public's reading of the economy is usually quite accurate and can hint at future spending trends, the public struggles when trying to predict the future.

For example, most Americans in mid-1965 said they thought the United States would be more successful than the communists at winning over the Vietnamese people.

Most said in the late 1980s that a cure for AIDS was likely before 2000.

In early 2001, most thought health problems would keep Vice President Dick Cheney from completing a full term.

None of these predictions came true.

"The American public doesn't have a good track record as a predictor of events," said Karlyn Bowman, a polling specialist at the American Enterprise Institute who has studied public attitudes about the future.

When done carefully, polling fares well at measuring attitudes.

Poll questions about future expectations can provide an important part of that picture.

For instance, when more than half say they don't expect Iraq will be able to establish a stable government, that's a good indicator people have shaky confidence in how things are going there.

One of the most reliable predictors of behavior can be found in economic polling.

"Where questions about the future are most relevant is with regard to economic expectations and purchasing," said Robert

Shapiro, a public opinion specialist at Columbia University.

When people are asked about situations of which they have little firsthand knowledge, their responses are largely guesswork. But even in those cases, there have been instances when public expectations were on the mark.

Seven in 10 in the late 1980s said they thought it was unlikely that communism would largely disappear in the next decade. While diminished, communism didn't disappear.

And sometimes people just tend to believe the worst will happen.

Asked in the late 1990s whether the crime rate will rise over the next 50 years, a majority said they thought it would.

"When asked questions on expectations about the nation's social fabric," Bowman said, "people are generally pessimistic."

Will Lester covers polling and politics for The Associated Press.

Dinosaur footprints found near nation's capital

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Near the sprawl of a major highway, an amateur paleontologist found what he says are the first footprints ever uncovered of a 6-foot-long plant-eating dinosaur that roamed the Earth about 100 million years ago.

In addition to being the first tracks ever found of the dinosaur, the footprints are the first evidence that members of the Hyslopophidion family roamed what is now Maryland.

"It was thrilling, in a sense, because it became a world 'first,'" Ray Stanford, who has spent 10 years digging in streambeds near the Interstate 95 corridor, told The (Baltimore) Sun.

Bouncers accused of killing New Orleans tourist

NEW ORLEANS — Three Bourbon Street bouncers were booked with negligent homicide after a coroner said a Georgia college student died of suffocation because they held him in a choke hold for 12 minutes.

Coroner Frank Minyard said Levon Jones' death was caused by a combination of the choke hold and pressure on his back that prevented him from taking breaths.

"The bouncers killed that man — period," Minyard said. He said it was probably an accident. "The bouncers didn't have that in mind at the time, I'm sure, but that's how it happened," he said.

Arthur Irons, 40, Clay Montz, 32, and Matthew Taylor, 21, turned themselves into police Thursday night after warrants were issued for their arrests. New Orleans police spokesman Paul Accardo said.

From The Associated Press



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Winner steps up

FL TALLAHASSEE — It took Robert G. Swofford Jr. more than a month to come forward and claim his \$60 million Lotto prize, but he had to take care of some unfinished business — divorcing his wife.

Swofford, a postal worker from Seminole County, claimed his prize Tuesday in a \$34.7 million lump sum payout, ending weeks of mystery about who won the Nov. 24 drawing.

Swofford, 53, and his wife separated three years ago. But two weeks after the winning numbers were announced, Ann Swofford served him with divorce papers and claimed a share of the prize.

Just before Christmas, the Swoffords and their lawyers hammered out an agreement. His wife will get \$5.25 million and \$1 million will be set aside to support their 11-year-old son.

Ticket on top of injury

UT ST. GEORGE — A man who managed to drive himself to the emergency room after being shot in the calf with a nail gun got more bad news after having his wound treated.

He was ticketed for not stopping when ordered.

Utah Highway Patrol Trooper Ben Lang started chasing the man's vehicle Tuesday after it was spotted driving recklessly on Interstate 15 and tailed the man to the hospital.

At one point, Lang said he told the driver over a loudspeaker to pull over and said the man got out of his car at a stop light. When Lang told him to get back in his car and pull over, the man took off again toward the hospital.

Kidney offered to friend

MN MINNEAPOLIS — The brotherhood of cops in Minneapolis is about to get even closer thanks to one officer's decision to offer a kidney to an ailing colleague.

Officer Ron Reier, Police Department spokesman, was scheduled to donate a kidney this week to fellow officer and friend Jeff Seidl.

Seidl has to undergo kidney dialysis three times a week. He needs another kidney transplant because the kidney he received from a relative began to fail about a year ago.

Reier said testing showed they're "enough of a match to make it work."

The transplant was scheduled Friday at Fairview University Medical Center. Both officers plan to return to work in a few weeks.

Tree blaze kills 1

NY NEW YORK — A boy playing with a cigarette lighter set a Christmas tree ablaze in a Queens apartment building, starting a fire that killed one person and injured several others, authorities said.

The fire began on the first floor of 96-05 50th Avenue in the Corona section and was under control, the Fire Department said. Flames spread to the upper floors of the building, and firefighters found a dead body inside an apartment on



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

the third floor.

The boy's grandfather, Javier Urbano, 48, told Newsday that he was asleep at the time the fire was set.

Bartender charged

TX HOUSTON — A bartender was jailed in the shooting death of a customer who had argued over a missing purse at a tavern.

Willie A. Burton was held in lieu of \$40,000 bail on a murder charge. Police said Burton, 35, is charged in the death of Jaquana Singleton, 26.

Singleton's family said she and Burton then got into a heated argument about finding the missing purse. Burton allegedly pulled a handgun from her pocket during the argument and shot Singleton once, said investigators.

Police said the missing purse was found later in a trash bin outside the northeast Houston bar.

Grizzly bear tracks

AK FAIRBANKS — A jokerish bear — or perhaps a deformed one — is trying to freak out hikers.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has received several reports of people walking trails at Creamer's Field who came across



Flipping over temps

Sean Kingsbury, from Monterey, Calif., does a back flip while enjoying a break in the weather at the Carmel River State Beach.

grizzly bear tracks.

But, upon closer inspection, officials are ruling out a real bear.

"It's either a person or a circus bear with two left front feet walking on its hands," said state wildlife biologist Harry Reynolds. "There are no hind tracks."

The tracks feature a foot pad, toes and claws that stretch out 3 inches from the toes. Reynolds said it's either a boot or some attachment someone is putting on a boot.

Pushing county merge

ME AUGUSTA — A legislator from Appleton is pushing a plan to merge Maine's 16 counties into eight to help ease the state's property tax burden. County government is the fastest-growing service that relies on property taxes, and tax reform should begin with reform of county government, Barbara Merrill said.

Snake not cause of crash

CA SAN FRANCISCO — A woman who died after hitting a tree while driving on the expressway was found with her pet boa constrictor around her neck, but police say they don't believe the snake had anything to do with the accident.

Acquaintances said Margaret Ann Walters, 29, often wore her 3-foot-long boa constrictor. Police said they found an open container of alcohol in her car.

The snake, which survived the crash, was taken to an animal shelter.

Animal cruelty charges

ID EVANSVILLE — Misdemeanor charges of animal cruelty, not felonies, will be filed against two former Wal-Mart assistant managers accused of shooting and killing a stray cat in a food-store trailer.

Vanderburgh County Prosecutor Stan Levco said he decided to file the charges after meeting with the sheriff's detective who investigated the animal-cruelty complaint. Levco added he also considered charging the store's former head manager, Darrel Weitzel, with animal cruelty. But the detective who questioned those involved determined Weitzel did not order an assistant manager to kill the stray.

Contraband conviction

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — A man serving a life sentence for murder was sentenced to three additional years in prison for passing out cheese sandwiches while in jail.

Douglas Eugene Wilson, 45, pleaded guilty to possession of contraband and was sentenced by District Judge Thomas Kane.

Prosecutors said Wilson had the sandwiches while in jail awaiting trial on the murder charge and he tried to give them to other inmates, which is a violation of jail rules.

A sheriff's deputy testified at a hearing in May that they warned Wilson not to pass food to other inmates then shocked him with a stun gun when he ignored them.



Game time

Aaron Laughlin, 8, background, smiles as Dalton Hargrove, 6, aims a basketball in the Yucca Recreation Center's gym in Roswell, N.M.



Room on the rocks

Brett Thorne, 25, is silhouetted in a misty window in Kansas City, Mo., as he painted the interior of a building the color Margarita Green. He is helping a friend convert the former antique store into the second location of Scott Fitness.



Icy conditions

A car carefully makes its way down an ice-coated lane in Bainbridge, Ohio. A mix of snow, sleet, and ice rain fell from the skies, making travel treacherous.



Always prepared

Reed Ronan of Arkadelphia, Ark., gathered all the umbrellas he could find to make a rain tent in his front yard.



Wet kisses

Jo Lynn Mehaffy, a groomer at Wild Dog Ranch Grooming Co., in Burlington, Iowa, gives Buddy, a schnauzer and poodle mix, a kiss while giving the dog a hair cut.

Drought worries no more

CA SANTA BARBARA — City officials' worries over three dry winters are washing away. Two weeks of rain have caused Gibraltar Dam to spill over the top and Lake Cachuma has risen 19 feet since Sept. 1. Before the rains, the City Council was gearing up to declare a drought warning to residents. It will revisit the issue in April.

Sentence in attack

TX FORT WORTH — A man who fatally shot his estranged wife and wounded her lover in 1998 was sentenced to 15 years in prison for attacking the suitor.

The assailant's son, in tearful testimony, blamed him for his mother's loss.

Jimmy Dean Watkins pleaded guilty to attempted capital murder for shooting Keith Fontenot during the confrontation in which he killed his wife, Nancy, with multiple gunshots.

Jurors in October 1999 convicted Watkins of murder but found that he shot his wife under "audacious passion." Watkins received 10 years' probation in a decision that stunned prosecutors and gained national attention. State District Judge Bob Gill of Fort Worth sentenced him to 120 days in prison as a condition of the probation on his wife's slaying.

Abuse allegations denied

KS TOPEKA — A couple pleaded not guilty in federal court to criminal charges stemming from allegations they abused mentally ill adults in their care.

The 35 charges against Arlan D. Kaufman, 68, and his wife, Linda J., 61, include conspiracy, mail fraud, health care fraud, holding mentally ill adults in involuntary servitude and forcing them to do labor.

The Kaufmans operated a treatment center in Newton, in central Kansas, for the mentally ill. A complaint filed in October accused them of abusing residents and forcing some of them to work nude on a farm about 50 miles from the group home in 1999.

A federal grand jury indictment issued last week also alleged they physically, psychologically and sexually abused group home residents, kept two people in involuntary servitude for 14 years, and defrauded the federal Medicare.

Clout from grave

MN ANOKA — Longtime Anoka City Council member John Weaver has remained a political force even from beyond the grave.

In a letter opened to the public, Weaver asked that his son, Jeff, be selected to replace him on the City Council.

The letter was written before Weaver's Dec. 18 death of cancer.

Jeff Weaver, who has never held elective office, said he appreciates his father's plan. "It would have been done with a wink and a smile," he said.

Some on the council want to honor John Weaver's request. But if the council splits 2-2, Mayor Bjorn Skogquist can appoint a suc-

cessor.

Realty prices soar

HI HONOLULU — The median price for an existing, single-family home on Oahu reached a record \$495,000 in December, when 417 single-family homes and 701 condominiums were sold, an industry expert said. The median prices for condos last month was \$217,000, down slightly from November. Harvey Shapiro, Honolulu Board of Realtors research economist, says Hawaii's strong housing market is expected to continue this year.

Incorrect census count

MA BOSTON — The state's Inspector General says Gov. Mitt Romney failed to take steps to force the U.S. Census Bureau to correct Massachusetts' population by adding the 30,000 college students living in the Bay State.

"I think it's very disappointing that a matter of this financial magnitude could slip through the cracks," Inspector General Gregory W. Sullivan said in a letter he sent Romney. He attributed the incorrect count to a data-gathering flaw, and said he had warned Romney of the problem in May 2003.

The census bureau announced last month that Massachusetts was the only state in the nation that lost population between 2003 and 2004.

The state is losing about \$24 million in federal funds for Medicaid and community development block grants because of the under-count, Sullivan said.

Unwanted shower

FL EAGLE LAKE — Say it, don't spray it.

That's the message from Vice Mayor Dennis Pate, who accused former city manager Linda Weldon of spewing saliva at him after a city of council meeting last month. He wants a new rule to prohibit spitting at meetings.

But Weldon denies that saliva ever passed her lips.

"That is the most asinine and juvenile thing I have heard," she said.

The alleged spitting was preceded by an argument between Pate and Weldon over two minor issues at a city council meeting.

Biosphere expansion

AZ TUCSON — The Texas company that built and owns the Biosphere 2 Center near Oracle has formally put up for sale the 3.1-acre glass terrarium and 70 other buildings on the 140-acre campus.

"This is one of the most spectacular properties in Southern Arizona — if not the most spectacular — so we think it should attract some interest," said Christopher T. Bannon, general manager of Decisions Investment Corp. of Fort Worth, which owns Biosphere 2.

The campus, 16 miles north of Tucson in Pinal County, has more than 300,000 square feet of space including offices, classrooms, laboratories, residential housing, and a hotel and conference center.

It remains open as a tourist destination and Bannon said more than 85,000 people visited the center last year.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Star comes of age with 'Phantom'

Young actress Emmy Rossum winning raves in famous role

BY ELAINE DUTKA
The Los Angeles Times

At 12, Emmy Rossum was a student at Manhattan's chic, all-girl Spence School when educators upset with her frequent absences delivered an ultimatum: Spend less time at the Metropolitan Opera, where she had been singing in the children's chorus for five years, or sever her ties with its institution.

She chose the latter. While she missed out on the usual high school camaraderie, the trade-offs were considerable. By night she performed alongside stars including Plácido Domingo, Kim Te Kanawa and Denyce Graves and by day took "virtual classes" sponsored online by Stanford University. At the Met, she also learned breath control, language dexterity and discipline—handy skills when, shortly thereafter, she switched her focus to acting.

That path, like her previous one, has been an education in itself.

After a series of TV roles, Rossum, then 13, played a tooth-deprived Appalachian orphan in Maggie Greenwald's "Songcatcher"—a performance the Independent Spirit Awards honored as "the best debut" of 2000. Two years later, she picked up pointers from "Who's Who of Hollywood talent" playing Sean Penn's murdered daughter in Clint Eastwood's critically acclaimed "Mystic River."

Last summer, Rossum co-starred as a brainiac love interest in the global-warming disaster film "The Day After Tomorrow."

Nothing prepared her, however, for assuming a lead role in Joel Schumacher's \$70-million film version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "The Phantom of the Opera." Although the picture has elicited mixed reviews, Rossum has come out a winner.

The National Board of Review called her portrayal of Christine, a young soprano at the Paris Opera who falls under the Phantom's spell, the best breakthrough performance by an actress this year. The Broadcast Film Critics Association also gave her a critics' choice award. And, next month, the 18-year-old will be competing for best actress in a musical or comedy at the Golden Globe ceremony.

Reached at the tiny New York apartment she shares with her mom and teacup Maltese, Christine, Rossum basks in the afterglow. Three bouquets arrive during one 90-minute stretch.

And her Spence classmates have been calling. It seems to have slipped their minds, Rossum observes dryly, that—lacking designer clothes and upper-crust credentials—she'd never been embraced by them. Now it's all about having lunch... six years too late.

Schumacher, a Hollywood veteran ("The Client"), knows the syndrome well. Success is a "bucking bronco," he said, and the bumps are inevitable.

"Child performers have additional pressures," the director says.

"Either they go crazy and become drug-crazed slackers, or they incorporate the training into their DNA. Emmy has an incredible work ethic. She was a young girl of 16 at the beginning of the shoot and a formidable woman at the end."

Even before she plunged into "Phantom," however, Rossum was a force. Greenwald remarked that she was "very assertive for someone so young." And Alan Hruska, who directed her in the 1999 romantic comedy "Nola," commented on the youngster's "keen sense of her own worth."

The daughter of a photographer mother and banker father who divorced when she was 3, Rossum is certainly no shrinking violet.

Self-possessed and intelligent, she admits to being "sassy" and headstrong—and makes no apologies for that. On "Phantom," she says, Schumacher gave her creative



Actress Emmy Rossum arrives at the premiere of her new movie, "The Phantom of the Opera," in Leicester Square in London last month. The film is based on the musical by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber.

freedom, and she was determined to make the most of the role.

After auditioning 200 actresses over a six-month stretch, Schumacher came up empty-handed.

Then he learned about Rossum, giving her a call in May 2003, right after "The Day After Tomorrow" wrapped. Two days later she was back in New York singing "Think of Me" for her screen test.

Watching her in costume and full makeup, co-star Gerard Butler, who plays the Phantom, stood behind Schumacher at the monitor and whispered "hire her" in his ear. Rossum repeated the tune for Lloyd Webber in his New York apartment and, obviously, scored again. A few days later, her agent was on the phone to her, saying she'd gotten the part—a moment equal to that, a few years back, when she got "Mystic River" and "The Day After Tomorrow" in the same 24-hour period.

The actress intentionally avoided seeing the stage production to avoid any preconceptions. Her goal: to ground the character in reality—no matter that it was a musical. Rossum studied the older man-younger woman relationship from choreographer George Balanchine and ballerina Suzanne Farrell to get a grip on the student-mentor dynamic. She attended a seance to better understand Christine, still coming to terms with her father's death. Before the shoot, she studied ballet and started singing again after a five-year hiatus.

"Because the set is such an artificial environment—hair, makeup, 'Action'—I need to tap into my memory bank and find something to draw on," she said. "I always break myself down emotionally, enlarging certain parts of myself. All of a sudden, I'm more Christine than Emmy, a moth in larva coming out of the shell."

"This shoot was tough on my family because—in inhabiting Christine's terror and pain—I was depressed, tormented, for six months. Wearing the tightest of corsets for 14 hours a day made things even tougher."

Rather than paralyzing her newfound fame into high-profile assignments, Rossum is leaning toward two smaller projects. One deals with drug addiction and the other with a real-life 19-year-old athlete who has overcome prejudice and adversity. A new album, she suggests, would also be a nice change—a chance to express herself rather than a character. Sarah McLachlan, Celine Dion and Evanescence are among her musical muses.

No trace of Swedish cellist after tsunami

Beach Boys founder Brian Wilson is asking for help in finding a Swedish cellist swept away in the South Asian tsunami.

Markus Sandlund, 29, of the Stockholm Stringers n' Horns, performed on Wilson's Grammy-nominated "Smile" album and Wilson's recent "Smile" tour. Sandlund and his girlfriend, Sophia, went to Thailand after finishing the "Smile" tour in Australia and New Zealand, according to a statement Wednesday on Wilson's Web site.

The couple, vacationing at the Orchid Beach Resort at Khao Lak, were in the hotel pool when the enormous wave hit. Sophia was swept away and later rescued, but Sandlund has not been found.

"I have been devastated since I heard the news that Markus is missing in Thailand," Wilson said. The 62-year-old singer-songwriter has sent an "agent" to try to find Sandlund but has turned up no trace of him. He asked that anyone with any information contact his Web site.

"My prayers go out to all of the victims and their families and I would ask you to say a prayer for Markus' safe return," Wilson added.



Sandlund

Poli: Hendrix sports best guitar face

Jimmi Hendrix not only had the skills to become a rock legend—he apparently had the right look as well.

A recent poll found that Hendrix had the best "guitar face"—the look guitarists get when trying to nail a high note or power chord.

Hendrix received 24 percent of the 3,000 votes cast online by the public and a poll by some 20 celebrity judges. B.B. King captured 18 percent of the vote, followed by Angus Young of AC/DC with 16 percent.

Gary Lucas, guitarist for Gods and Monsters, said he voted for Hendrix because he "channeled all the spiritual ecstasy of the universe through his hands, and this was naturally mirrored in his face."

The poll by on-demand television service Mag Rack accompanied a contest to find the best amateur guitar face. Les Campbell of Nicholasville, Ky., was chosen the winner from more than 600 contestants.

In his photo, Campbell, a sound and recording engineer, showcases a classic headbanging. Fu Manchu musician Elvis Presley also "checked off a resemblance to Metallica frontman James Hetfield, according to several of the judges."

Final season for 'The Osbournes'

Mark your calendars—the **Ozzy Osbourne** can will be back Jan. 17 with the final season of their reality show, MTV announced Thursday.

"The Osbournes" chronicles the lives of goth-rock star Ozzy, his wife, Sharon, and two of their children—daughter Kelly and son Jack. They first allowed MTV cameras into their Beverly Hills, Calif., home in 2002.

The hit TV series showcases the offbeat antics of the family as Ozzy and Sharon deal with the complexities of running a household—usually with a slew of obscurities.

The blunt force of the MTV cameras became part of the family, documenting what is possibly the most dramatic year we have had," Sharon Osbourne said in a statement.

Stone surprised by criticism of movie

Director Oliver Stone said he was surprised by the critical reaction to his historical epic "Alexander"—and put the blame on the fundamentalist morality in some parts of the United States.

Critics lambasted the movie, which stars Irish actor Colin Farrell, and some conservative groups condemned Stone's depiction of the Macedonian conqueror's sexuality.

"I was quite taken aback by the controversy and fierceness of the reviews about a character we don't really know too much about," Stone told reporters in London Wednesday before the film's British premiere.

"I operate on my passion and sometimes I'm naive, I don't think about the consequences," he said.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

YOUR MONEY

Loans heavy burden for some students

BY PETER SVENSSON

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Brennan Taylor has a good job, but spending \$200 on his daughter's seventh birthday seems like "an awful lot."

"I'm trying to set a strict budget for the household," said Taylor, 34, a Madison, N.J., resident. "It's pretty stressful."

Taylor's finances and credit are lobbied by student loans — a fifth of his income every month goes toward paying down that debt.

Surgically college costs have saddled many people like him with steep debt at the start of their professional lives.

A 2002 survey of recent graduates by student loan company Nellie Mae found that the average student loan burden for a bachelor's degree was \$18,900, up 66 percent from five years earlier.

Thanks to low interest rates and increased initial salaries, the average amount recent graduates were spending on debt repayment was just 7 percent of their annual incomes. That number that has been fairly unchanged for the last 10 years and is considered manageable.

But many graduates' debt burdens are well above average. And many who follow passions that aren't bankable, make a few financial missteps or are just plain unlucky can find their debts are out of control.



Brennan Taylor, left, sits with his daughter, Dirdre, and son, Crispin, right, and his wife, Krista White, at their home in Madison, N.J., on Monday. Taylor says he has to set a strict budget for the household because he is paying off his student loans and his wife is still studying for an advanced degree and racking up more debt.

Cherise Fung, 30, put herself through Cornell University after her parents died during her freshman year. Because she took several leaves of absence, it took her 10 years to graduate. And she was already dealing with financial problems when she returned to school from her last leave.

"I still haven't recovered from that one semester. And that was in 2001," the Flanders, N.J., resident said.

Now, Fung is finding that her degree in anthropology isn't opening a lot of doors. Her expenses are hard to meet with the jobs she's been getting, mostly office work.

"There's times when I wonder if maybe I would have been better off getting a job and not bothering with college," she said.

Part of the problem is that a bachelor's degree doesn't always cut it in today's workplace.

"The bachelor's degree has become the new high school degree," said Tamara Draut at Demos, New York-based think tank. A graduate degree is necessary to reach get to the top level of more and more professions.

"It's happening in education, business, even social work," Draut said.

Taylor got a graduate degree in Internet strategy management four years ago. It cost him \$30,000 in loans, but has paid off with a job in Web publishing. Before that, he had "really crummy jobs."

Part of the reason he's still having trouble making ends meet is that his wife is working on a doctorate in anthropology and religion, a field where an advanced degree is practically necessary for work. She has racked up more than \$100,000 in debt and has two more years to go.

"What I'm dreading is when my wife's going to be done, because that's going to be huge, and her income probably isn't going to help a lot," Taylor said.

Among the effects of higher debt, according to the 2002 Nellie Mae survey: 38 percent of graduates reported delaying buying a home because of their loans, and 25 percent postponed having children, up from 12 percent in 1991.

Because he's often a month behind on student loan payments, Taylor has had enough credit problems that he doubts he'll ever be able to afford a house. Besides, he said, his wife's loans will be almost "mortgage scale."

As tuition costs and enrollment rose through the 1990s, grant money did not keep pace, meaning students have been shouldering an ever-increasing share of their education costs. While before, most were able to finance their studies with grants and part-time work, loans are now inescapable for many.

"This generation is the first to shoulder the costs of their college primarily through interest-bearing

College debt deepens by degree

A 2002 survey of recent graduates found the average student loan for a bachelor's degree was \$18,900, up 66 percent from five years earlier.

Borrowers in debt by degree

13 45 24 16
Master's
Ph.D.
Professional
Bachelor's

May not add to 100 due to rounding

Average lifetime earnings for college degrees compared to a high school diploma

Bachelor's \$1.3 million

Master's \$1.7

Ph.D. \$2.6

Professional \$3.9

Source: 2002 National Student Loan Survey, Nellie Mae

ing loans rather than grants," Draut said.

Jackeline King, director at the American Council on Education's Center for Policy Analysis, believes the picture for more recent graduates may be even bleaker because the job market has weakened.

"I think that we've been insulated from feeling the full effect of the increased borrowing by the fact that interest rates have been low, and up until the most recent years, the job market has been good," King said.

ing loans rather than grants," Draut said.

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THURSDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES				
	52-week High	Low	Home	
Dow Jones Industrial	10,618.61	1,018.40	1,018.40	
S&P 500	3,023.28	2,743.46	2,743.46	
Nasdaq Composite	2,177.29	259.86	259.86	
Dow Jones	7,713.18	6,211.33	6,211.33	
Nasdaq	1,458.58	1,158.74	1,158.74	
Nasdaq	2,177.29	259.86	259.86	
S&P 500	3,023.28	2,743.46	2,743.46	
S&P 500	3,023.28	2,743.46	2,743.46	
S&P 500	3,023.28	2,743.46	2,743.46	
S&P 500	3,023.28	2,743.46	2,743.46	

NYSE				
	Most Active (\$1 or more)			
Recent	54,642	137	137	
Recent	54,642	137	137	
Recent	54,642	137	137	
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Recent	54,642	137	137	

NYSE				
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Recent	54,642	137	137	

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates				
Dollar buys	\$1	\$1,559		
Dollar buys	\$1	\$1,559		
Dollar buys	\$1	\$1,559		
Dollar buys	\$1	\$1,559		
Dollar buys	\$1	\$1,559		

Commercial rates				
Bahrian (Dinar)	\$1	\$1,559		
British pound	\$1	\$1,559		
Canadian dollar	\$1	\$1,559		
Danish (Krone)	\$1	\$1,559		
Egypt (Pound)	\$1	\$1,559		
Hong Kong (Dollar)	\$1	\$1,559		
Hungary (Forint)	\$1	\$1,559		
Iceland (Krona)	\$1	\$1,559		
Israel (Shekel)	\$1	\$1,559		
Japan (Yen)	\$1	\$1,559		
Kuwait (Dinar)	\$1	\$1,559		
Norway (Krone)	\$1	\$1,559		
Philippines (Dollar)	\$1	\$1,559		
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	\$1	\$1,559		
South Korea (Won)	\$1	\$1,559		
Switzerland (Franc)	\$1	\$1,559		
Taiwan (Dollar)	\$1	\$1,559		
Turkey (New Lira)	\$1	\$1,559		
U.S. dollar	\$1	\$1,559		

Military exchange rates				
Dollar buys	\$1	\$1,559		
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Dollar buys	\$1	\$1,559		

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U.S. dollar	\$1	\$1,559		

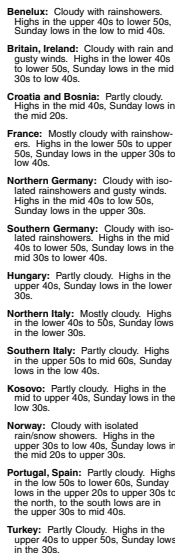
C Money and Sensibility

Job forecast looks good

NEW YORK — This year's college graduates stand to have an easier time finding employment than those of recent years, reports the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Employers said they were also more optimistic about the challenges they will face this year, and up until the most recent years, the job market has been good," King said.

ing loans rather than grants," Draut said.



AFRICA MIDEAST

TURKMENISTAN

Dakar	78	66	Nairobi	82	55
59/37					
Ashgabat					
Kabul	41/21				
Islamabad					63/38

SYRIA Baghdad 50/27 Tehran New Delhi 68/47

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Chennai 45 34 Cdy Greensboro, N.C. 65 44 Cdy Montgomery 70 52 Cdy Salt Lake City 46 33 Snow Yakima 31 15 Snow

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and 5-day forecasts go to the USAFE Operational Weather Squadron home

	Today	Tomorrow
1. <i>What is the purpose of the study?</i>		
2. <i>What are the research questions?</i>		
3. <i>What are the hypotheses?</i>		
4. <i>What are the variables?</i>		
5. <i>What are the methods?</i>		
6. <i>What are the results?</i>		
7. <i>What are the conclusions?</i>		
8. <i>What are the implications?</i>		
9. <i>What are the limitations?</i>		
10. <i>What are the future directions?</i>		

16 Jan 05 17 Jan 05 29 Jan 05 02 Feb 05

on Eastern U.S. time

high temperature zones for the day.

6. *Field*

ultors at your new station

TADCS AND STRIDES

Your Hometown Newspaper

Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



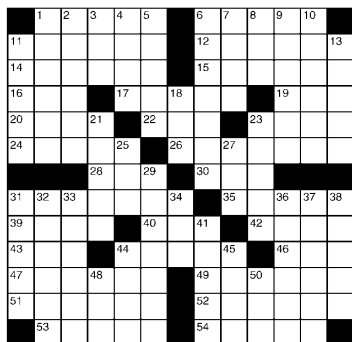
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 1997 movie starring Shaq
6 Code name?
11 Balanced
12 Horrific
14 Modest
15 "That Scrambled Word Game"
16 Praise in rhyme
17 High points
19 Aachen article
20 React to reville
22 Part of H.M.S.
23 Encourage
24 Degree, to Emeril
26 Swears it's true
28 Journal
30 Verily
31 Mariachi instrument
35 Tapestry
39 Oodles
40 "— Miserables"
42 Past curfew
43 Roulette bet
44 Annual visitor
46 Carton
47 Fall
49 Speak unclearly
51 Ogling one
52 Makes use of
53 Australian river

- 54 Supermarket lineup

Down

- 1 Tiny apartment
2 Least ferocious
3 Recede
4 M. Fitzgerald
5 Bloodsucker
6 Sovereign power
7 Piece of work
8 Turntable rate (Abbr.)
9 Tools for duels
10 Mama Cass
11 Cut
13 Imports temporarily
18 Hamm of soccer
21 Brilliance
23 Lustrous gem
25 Ad — committee
27 Afternoon social
29 Exhibition area
31 Mail components
32 Unga residents
33 Cager nickname "Worm"
34 Neptune's realm
36 VW model
37 Coral formations (Abbr.)
38 Male and female
41 Poison dogwood
42 Ball of yarn
45 Capital of Fiji
48 Kinsman
50 Scratch

Answer to Previous Puzzle

D	U	C	K	S	P	H	D	D	E	B
I	S	L	A	M	A	I	R	E	V	E
P	E	A	L	E	T	R	U	M	P	E
V	E	L	V	E	T	E	O	N	S	
L	E	I	T	I	N	F	A	T	T	
I	T	E	M	S	T	O	O	D		
P	A	R	E	N	T	P	R	O	M	P
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P	A	I	R	S	E	L	F	R	Y	E
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1-8

CRYPTOQUIP

MG GSN TVA, ANQMVFN UN
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IJMRL M QHYI THJGNJ.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF AN ACTOR IS ELIMINATED FROM A FILM'S CAST, I SUPPOSE HE'S OUT OF THE PICTURE.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals S

Singh back in form with early Mercedes lead

BY DOUG FERGUSON
The Associated Press

KAPALUA, Hawaii — No one is ever sure what the first round of the PGA Tour season will bring, so Vijay Singh just wanted to make sure he finished under par and kept within range of the leaders.

After making seven birdies and missing a half-dozen other good chances, Singh wound up with a 66 at the Mercedes Championships and had a one-shot lead over Craig Parry.

A new season brought a familiar name to the top of the leader board Thursday at Kapalua. It was an early statement from the 41-year-old Fijian that he might have yet another chapter to write in his amazing career.

"That's the way he was being playing," Tiger Woods said after a 68. "It's a continuation of it."

Singh had said he wanted to get off to a strong start, especially coming off a season in which he won nine times and shattered the PGA Tour earnings record with nearly \$11 million. He said he wanted to stake his ground, and remind the rest of his peers that he's still the man to beat.

But in another sign that his game is quickly rounding into form, Woods hit his driver on just about every hole and was in the short grass most of the time. A year ago, his opening tee shot sailed so far to the right on the expansive fairways of the Plantation Course that it also disappeared into waist-high weeds.

He missed the fairway again this year — but only because it was so long (367 yards) and straight that it ran through the fairway and down a slope of thick rough. Solid from tee-to-green, Woods suffered the same problem as just about everyone at Kapalua.

The course is so lush that extra grass means extra grain on the greens, and that makes it difficult to judge the proper pace and the right line. He missed eight birdie putts inside 15 feet.

"I've never seen them like this before, where they're this slow and this grainy," Woods said. "If you look at that leader board, you can see the guys aren't making a bunch of putts, because there's really no wind out there and the greens are soft. You would expect at least four or five guys to be 7 under par or better."

"But it's not going to happen with greens like this. It's just too hard to make putts." There's still three days to see if he's right, but the leaderboard did seem to indicate that scoring wasn't that easy.

Parry was one of three players on the PGA Tour who didn't have a three-putt last year, but he took three whacks on the par-5 15th and had to settle for par, slowing his rise up the leaderboard. He finished with a 15-foot birdie and was at 67.

Sergio Garcia, Stewart Cink and Jonathan Kaye joined Woods at 68. Eight players were another shot behind, including Ernie Els, Steve Flesch, Chad Campbell and Adam Scott.

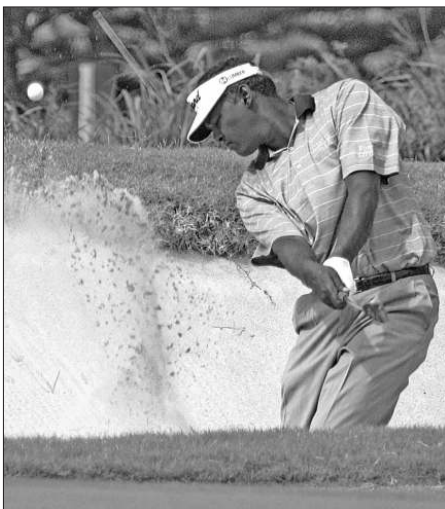
"Like everyone else, probably a little struggling on the greens because of the strength of grain," Flesch said. "The greens roll great, but it's just a wavy grass that we are not accustomed to much."

What everyone is accustomed to seeing is Singh's name atop the leaderboard.

He missed a 12-foot putt on the par-5 ninth and made the turn at 2 under, four shots out of the lead. Then came a sand wedge into 6 feet for birdie, and an 8-iron into 4 feet for birdie, and another sand wedge to 6 feet for birdie.

Woods also was making a move and was tied for Singh along the back nine, but he kept putting the ball in tough spots on the green, even though the length was rarely more than 15 feet.

"It's only the first day," Singh said. "You can't be too concerned about the leader board. At the end of the day, you make sure you keep up the pace."



Vijay Singh hits out of the practice-green sand trap before starting the Mercedes Championships on Thursday in Maui, Hawaii. The tournament marks the start of the PGA season. Singh picked up where he left off last year, taking the first round lead with a 66.

With no progress to report, NHL cancels meeting

The Associated Press

Sports briefs

NEW YORK — After labor negotiations broke down last month, there was nothing left for the NHL and the players' association to talk about.

Now the league doesn't even have any news to share with its board of governors.

A meeting scheduled for next week between Commissioner Gary Bettman and executives from all 30 teams was called off Thursday because the planned update session proved to be pointless.

"Since there has been no progress since we scheduled it, it's not surprising that we chose to cancel it," NHL chief legal officer Bill Daly told The Associated Press on Thursday night.

Owners and players haven't sat down at the bargaining table since last month, when the sides met twice within six days.

"There was clearly a hope, if not an expectation, that we'd be further along than this," Daly said. "We were hopeful that progress could continue to be made, that hopefully the union would come forward with a new proposal."

"I think that is appropriate given the fact that they rejected our counterproposal after only a

matter of hours of consideration. The fact that they didn't is unfortunate."

The board of governors hasn't met since September, when Bettman imposed the lockout that reached its 113th day on Thursday and has forced the cancellation of 571 regular-season games and the 2005 All-Star Game.

There was speculation that Bettman might emerge from next Friday's scheduled meeting either with an announcement that this season had been called off, or with a final date for saving the season.

"There's not going to be a drop-dead date," Daly says. "We believe the only important thing is a negotiated agreement that will work for the sport and the industry long term."

"When we're past the point of no return, I think an appropriate announcement will be made. But we're not going to give that announcement in advance."

There were also rumors that the NHL might have come up with a new proposal that it wanted to run by the board of governors before presenting it to the players. Daly dispelled that notion.

No North American sports league has lost an entire season to a labor dispute, but the NHL is moving dangerously close to becoming the first.

If the season is wiped out, it would mark the first time in 86 years that the Stanley Cup wasn't awarded. A flu epidemic canceled the 1919 final series between Montreal and Seattle.

New Mexico State coach Henson hospitalized

LAS CRUCES, N.M. — New Mexico State coach Lou Henson was hospitalized Thursday with pneumonia and he won't return to the sideline this weekend in a wheelchair as planned.

Henson, stricken in September with viral encephalitis, was scheduled to coach for the first time this season on Saturday night when New Mexico State hosts North Texas.

"We expect him to make a full recovery, but he's obviously not coming on the bench this weekend," school spokesman Sean Johnson said Thursday.

Henson, who will turn 73 on Monday, was to attend practice on Thursday afternoon but became ill and went to a Las Cruces hospital, Johnson said.

Henson is 21 wins short of becoming only the fifth Division I coach with 800 career victories.

The viral encephalitis — an acute inflammatory disease of the brain — caused paralysis in his right leg. He's still unable to walk on his own because he has only slight movement in that leg.

UConn rings stolen from Auerluma's car

HARTFORD, Conn. — Connecticut women's basketball coach Gen Auerluma is without four stolen national championship rings even though a suspected buyer was arrested Thursday.

Police said two teenagers took the rings Nov. 28 and sold them for \$150. Authorities say the rings are worth about \$800 each.

Auerluma said he had the rings in his briefcase for a university photo shoot. He left the briefcase in his car, parked in a Manchester commuter lot while he went to dinner, police said.

The teens, 13 and 15, broke into several cars in the lot that night.

Police arrested the teens last month after police reported seeing the boys wearing the rings.

Investigators didn't announce the theft until Thursday, when they arrested Javier Lago of East Hartford on charges of larceny and risk of injury to the juveniles. Lago was arraigned Thursday and was being held on \$20,000 bail. He is due back in court Feb. 9.

Dent upsets top seed Hewitt

ADELAIDE, Australia — American Taylor Dent upset top-seeded Lleyton Hewitt 7-6 (3), 6-3 Friday in the quarterfinals at the Australian men's hardcourt tennis championships.

The fifth-seeded Dent will play Argentina's Juan Ignacio Chela in the semifinals Saturday.

The fourth-seeded Chela beat Austrian Jurgen Melzer 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-2. Earlier, Sweden's Joachim Johansson beat countryman Thomas Enqvist 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 to advance to the other semifinal.

Johansson will face Olivier Rochus of Belgium, who beat third-seeded Nicolas Pietrangeli of Germany 6-7 (4), 7-6 (6), 7-5.

Clijsters to miss Australian

MELBOURNE, Australia — Kim Clijsters will not play in the Australian Open because of an ongoing left wrist injury.

Clijsters, who lost to fellow Belgian Justine Henin-Hardeweg in the finals of last year's Australian Open, had not entered the tournament, which begins Jan. 17. The 21-year-old former world No. 1 would have had to rely on a wild card to play.

Clijsters was limited to just 22 matches last season because of the wrist.

Depleted Duke still finding ways to pull out victories

Key injuries aren't slowing No. 5 Blue Devils

BY KEITH PARSONS

The Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — DeMarcus Nelson came to Duke as a can't-miss backcourt prospect, the career scoring leader in California prep history.

About a third of the way through his first season with the Blue Devils, the 6-foot-3 Nelson gets most of his playing time at power forward, where he often goes against players 5 or 6 inches taller.

"I never expected to do that, that's for sure," Nelson said.

Blue Devils coach Mike Krzyzewski has no choice. With forwards Shavlik Randolph (mono-nucleosis) and Reggie Love (broken foot) out for the next few weeks, someone needs to help center Shelden Williams in the paint.

Junior Lee Melchioni got his first start last Wednesday night against Princeton, and Nelson and former walk-on Patrick Johnson were the only other options. Thanks to some attrition in the offense, fifth-ranked Duke started with only eight recruited players anyway, leaving very little margin for injuries.

Yet that's exactly what has happened, even if Coach K isn't complaining.

"We have some injuries, but

come on, we're playing basketball," he said. "If we make excuses because of injuries, we're complete idiots. Hey, this is the hand we got, so let's play it."

So far, so good. The Blue Devils are 10-0 for the fourth time in the past five seasons, including victories over Michigan State and Oklahoma. After playing Temple on Saturday, they get into the bulk of their Atlantic Coast Conference schedule next week with a trip to North Carolina State.

That's the first of 13 straight league games.

"Our team right now is coming together tremendously, and when Shav and Reggie come back, we'll have other guys with game experience, and we'll be a force to reckon with," Melchioni said.

Despite the confidence shown by Krzyzewski and Melchioni, the Blue Devils do have some problems. In back-to-back victories over Clemson and Princeton, they averaged only 61 points, down from about 85 in the first eight games.

The style of play in the past two clearly has been methodical and dictated mostly by the opponent, but Duke still has shot only 37 percent. J.J. Redick scored 21 points against Princeton — on three baskets and a 14-for-14 effort at the free throw line — and he was the

only player in double figures for the Blue Devils.

"I think it's important for us to come out and play better offense on Saturday," Redick said. "It'd be great for us to get it going."

They need players such as Nelson and Melchioni to step in and perform up to the level of the others, something Nelson gave glimpses of Wednesday night.

When the Tigers closed within seven early in the second half, he stepped outside and made a three-pointer, then added a steal and a dunk to boost Duke's lead back to 13.

Nelson finished with seven points and nine rebounds.

"Unfortunately, our numbers are going down, and players are getting hurt," he said. "For me individually, it's an opportunity for me to help our team win and to keep this train rolling."

"Having this responsibility on my shoulders is something I've always looked forward to, something I've always had playing basketball."

Nelson's attitude is exactly what Krzyzewski wants to see from his players.

"You don't become a winning team by rationalizing and making excuses," he said. "You become a winner by defeating rationalization and having no excuses. That's the way we're going to run our program."



Duke head coach Mike Krzyzewski examines Reggie Love's foot after he broke it last week. Injuries have plagued No. 5 Duke this season.

Zags open title defense with win over Santa Clara

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Derek Raivov is glad he prepared himself in the pre-season for the point guards of the West Coast Conference by facing Oklahoma State's John Lucas, Georgia Tech's Jarrett Jack and Dee Brown of top-ranked Illinois.

Gonzaga's star sophomore might just be establishing himself as one of the country's elite at his position.

Raivov scored a career-high 32 points, made six three-pointers and hit all 10 of his free throws, and the 11th-ranked Bulldogs opened defense of their West Coast Conference title with a heated 91-87 victory over Santa Clara on Thursday night.

"Playing against all the top guards in the nation has been a great experience," Raivov said. "I got me prepared for whoever comes at me because I've already played against the best."

Adam Morrison added 18 points and Errol Knight had 11 points and eight rebounds in the first game for the Zags (11-2) since they had their seven-game winning streak snapped by a 63-61 loss to Missouri on Dec. 30.

They sent the Broncos to their fifth straight loss. Gonzaga has won nine in a row in the series and the last five at the Leavey Center, where Santa Clara's students packed the sold-out arena more than an hour before game time to taunt the visitors during warmups.



Gonzaga's Errol Knight (22) drives to the basket as Santa Clara's Sean Denison (15) defends in the first half on Thursday.

Doron Perkins scored 18 of his 22 points in the first half for Santa Clara (7-9), but went cold after halftime. He scored nine straight — with a four-point play and a three-pointer — to almost single-handedly get the Broncos back in the game after they fell behind by 15. He also had nine re-

bounds and four steals, and drew the assignment of defending Morrison, who at 6-foot-8 has a 6-inch height advantage.

"I feel like every time the win is right there and they take it away," Santa Clara's Kyle Bailey said of playing the Zags. "I'll get it figured out. I'd hate to come back for a sixth year just to beat them."

No. 9 Georgia Tech 80, Miami 69: At Atlanta, Will Bynum scored 21 points and Georgia Tech ruined Miami's Atlantic Coast Conference debut.

The Yellow Jackets (10-2, 1-0) bounced back from an overtime loss at No. 2 Kansas, a game in which second-leading scorer B.J. Elder injured a hamstring that could keep him out through this weekend.

Luke Schenscher added 15 points for Georgia Tech, while Jarrett Jack had 14 points and nine rebounds.

Guillermo Diaz had 27 points for the Huskies (9-3, 0-1), who moved from the Big East to the ACC this season. They had an eight-game winning streak snapped.

No. 12 Washington 84, Southern California 59: At Los Angeles, The Simmons scored 22 points and the Huskies won their ninth straight. Washington (13-1, 3-0 Pac-10) is off to its best start since 1982 when it won 10 in a row.

Freshman Nick Young scored 18 of his 20 points in the second half for the Trojans (7-7), who have yet to win a Pac-10 game under interim coach Jim Saia. The 0-3 mark is their worst conference start since

they began 0-4 in 1991, but still made the NCAA tournament.

No. 13 Arizona 87, California 67: Channing Frye had 20 points and eight rebounds to lead the visiting Wildcats to their ninth straight victory.

Hassan Adams added 16 points and Ivan Radenovic had 14 points and seven rebounds for Arizona (12-2, 2-0 Pac-10), which beat the Bears for the 11th time in the last 12 meetings.

Richard Midgley scored 14 points to lead California (8-5, 1-2).

No. 15 Texas 74, Memphis 67: P.J. Tucker scored 18 points, four in the final 42 seconds, to lead the host Longhorns (11-2). He had a fastbreak dunk after a turnover to make it 71-67, and then added two free throws with 17 seconds left.

Freshman Darius Washington led 23 points for the Tigers (7-7), who have lost five of seven.

No. 23 Cincinnati 83, DePaul 54: At Cincinnati, Jason Mastell scored 19 points for the Bearcats, who have won 26 of 29 over DePaul, including 14 straight on the Bearcats' home court.

Arneim Kirkland had 18 points for Cincinnati (12-1, 0-1 Conference USA).

Quemont Greer, who leads the conference in scoring at 24.1 points per game, had 12 on 4-of-13 shooting for the Blue Demons (8-4, 0-1). That ended his school-record streak of eight consecutive games with at least 20 points.

Top 25
roundup

Fashion statement: Kobe's jersey out of style

Sales plummet for Lakers' star after trial, team breakup

BY RUMKINI CALLIMACH

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Kobe Bryant is no longer a fashion icon.

For the last month, Bryant's No. 8 Lakers jersey — previously one of the best sellers in the world — has fallen out of the top 50, according to point-of-sale data tabulated by a Florida market research firm.

Bryant's NBA jersey was still the 10th-highest selling jersey for the year, but he finished the month of December at No. 72 — and in one week plunged to No. 90, a drastic slide for the player many once saw as the sport's next marketing golden boy.

"I would never have thought it would have dropped off like this," said Neil Schwartz, director of marketing and business development for SportsScanINFO in West Palm Beach, which tracks weekly sales data from sporting goods retailers nationwide.

Bryant's marketability has likely been hurt by the flurry of bad press he's been receiving lately, analysts say. It began with his rape case and included his feud with former teammate Shaquille O'Neal, his spat



For the last month, Kobe Bryant's Los Angeles Lakers jersey, previously one of the top-selling NBA jerseys worldwide, has fallen out of the top 50.

with current teammate Karl Malone and a new book by former coach Phil Jackson that portrays Bryant as an aloof prima donna.

Before the season started, O'Neal was traded to the Miami Heat and Jackson retired — departures that many fans have

blamed on Bryant.

"I was a big fan, but I just can't wear his jersey anymore," said Patrick Buan, 27, of Victorville, Calif., who last month put up for sale his four Bryant jerseys on eBay.

Bryant's agent, Bob Pelinka, did not return calls seeking comment. Nike, Bryant's main sponsor, also declined to comment, saying only that Bryant remains under contract with the company.

Officials at AEG, which owns the Staples Center, said sales of Bryant's jersey had dipped noticeably at the store in the arena in recent weeks. They said the problem began early this summer as Bryant began to face criminal rape charges which were later dropped after his accuser said she did not want to participate in the trial.

But the manufacturer got skittish while the case was pending, said Alan Key, vice president of merchandising for AEG. "He's such a significant player that [they] weren't willing to make all those goods and have him go to jail," he said.

Officials at Reebok, the company which manufactures the jersey, did not return repeated calls Thursday.

Schwartz said Bryant's legal troubles could account for a drop in sales in the summer and possibly at the beginning of the season — but not in December.

In June — when the preparations for Bryant's rape trial were going full tilt — Bryant jerseys hovered in the top five in terms of sales, according to Nielsen data at the No. 1 spot, according to Schwartz,

whose company tallies numbers from a wide range of retailers.

Industry insiders say that while fans may have been willing to look the other way during the rape scandal, they seem far less willing to forgive him now for what they see as the breakup of a championship team.

"I think a lot of people were understanding of the rape trial, because there are a lot of cases of players being entrapped," said Bob Dorfman, executive vice president of Pickett Advertising in San Francisco. "But it's all about the team and the championship in the cash register. When he jeopardized that by single-handedly blowing apart the team, it was the final straw for a lot of people."

The drop in sales is being felt in a wide variety of retail venues — from small sporting good chains to the Lakers' memorabilia hub at Staples Center.

"Kobe's jersey was a core part of our business — and now with the team going in the direction it has, we've ordered less and seen less of a demand," said Mike Batt, general manager of Fanzz in Salt Lake City, a sporting goods retail chain with 32 stores.

The drop in sales is bad news for Nike Inc., which sank a reported \$40 million into a multiyear contract with Bryant.

While Nike doesn't own the jersey — Massachusetts-based Reebok Inc. recently bought the licensing rights to all NBA player jerseys from Nike — the decline is further evidence that they may not see a return on their investment.

While both McDonald's and Nutella have since dropped him, Nike has stood by Bryant — and may yet use him in a new shoe, even in ones touting Bryant's own shoe.

Hamilton becomes team without scoring FG

BY LARRY LAGE

The Associated Press

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — Richard Hamilton is considered to be one of the best mid-range shooters in the NBA.

The Detroit Pistons shooting guard's misfiring on Thursday night earned him recognition like no other.

Hamilton became the first player in NBA history to lead his team in scoring without making a field goal, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. He went 0-for-10 from the floor but still paced Detroit with 14 points in the Pistons' 101-79 loss to the Memphis Grizzlies.

"It was just one of those nights," said Hamilton, who made all 14 of his free throws.

Bonzi Wells spoiled the strange night for Hamilton of the Pistons as he scored 23 points to lead Memphis to victory.

Hamilton, Detroit's leading scorer, wasn't the only Pistons player to struggle against the surging Grizzlies. Memphis held the defending NBA champions to 31.3 percent shooting, forced 23 turnovers and blocked 15 shots.

"Defensively, we were very active," said Grizzlies coach Mike Fratello.

The Pistons were very lethargic, dropping the ire of their coach — again.

"I never thought I would have to coach effort," Larry Brown said. "I've never had to do that in my entire life, and this is the last group that I expected to have to do it with."



Roundup

"Maybe a game like this will make us recognize how bad it is."

Though the Pistons (17-14) have played uninspired basketball for much of the season, they had won five of six and are only one game off last season's pace.

Memphis (17-17) reached .500 for the first time this season by extending their season-high winning streak to five games. They had won 5-11 when they hired Fratello on Dec. 2 to replace the retired Hubie Brown.

Wizards 101, SuperSonics 96: At Washington, the Wizards made the most of their first national TV appearance in 20 months.

Gilbert Arenas scored 27 points and Larry Hughes had 21 to lead six players in double figures as the Wizards improved to 5-5 against Western Conference teams.

Spurs 111, Pacers 98: At San Antonio, Tim Duncan scored 27 points and Tony Parker had 26, leading San Antonio past Indiana.

Manu Ginobili added 19 points, and Duncan grabbed 12 rebounds for San Antonio, which improved to 8-0 at home against Eastern Conference teams and 6-5 overall at the SDG Center. The Spurs earned their seventh double-digit victory in eight games.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	16	50		
Philadelphia	16	49	1 1/2	
Toronto	17	46		
New Jersey	11	39	4 1/2	
Total	38	107		

Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Orlando	26	76		
Washington	19	67	6 1/2	
Miami	14	53	8	
Charlotte	8	27	15 1/2	
Atlanta	5	25	16 1/2	

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	19	67		
Detroit	17	58	2	
Indiana	18	53	7 1/2	
Chicago	11	44		
Milwaukee	10	34	8	

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	20	67		
Dallas	10	57	4 1/2	
Phoenix	16	50		
Houston	16	50		
New Orleans	18	47	2 1/2	

Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Seattle	16	53		
Minnesota	14	53	6 1/2	
Portland	17	49		
Denver	14	45	9	

Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Phoenix	24	67		
San Antonio	18	53		
L.A. Lakers	16	53	1 1/2	
Los Angeles	16	51		
Golden State	11	34	17	

Thursday's Games

W	L	Score	Time
Milwaukee	at Toronto	96-90	7:30
Detroit	at Orlando	95-87	7:30
Detroit	at Boston	95-87	7:30
Sacramento	at Atlanta	95-87	7:30
Golden State	at New Jersey	95-87	7:30
New Orleans	at Memphis	95-87	7:30
Philadelphia	at Minnesota	95-87	7:30
Utah	at Chicago	95-87	7:30
Miami	at Portland	95-87	7:30
Houston	at L.A. Lakers	95-87	7:30
New York	at Cleveland	95-87	7:30
Denver	at San Antonio	95-87	7:30
New Jersey	at Orlando	95-87	7:30
Sacramento	at New Orleans	95-87	7:30
Boston	at Chicago	95-87	7:30
Indiana	at Milwaukee	95-87	7:30
Phoenix	at L.A. Clippers	95-87	7:30
San Antonio	at Sacramento	95-87	7:30
Golden State	at Toronto	95-87	7:30
San Antonio	at Phoenix	95-87	7:30
Miami	at Seattle	95-87	7:30
Portland	at Houston	95-87	7:30

Thursday

Wizards 107, SuperSonics 96

SEATTLE — Lewis 14-26-2-4, Colson 3-10-2, Hamilton 14-22-2-4, Allen 10-17-2, Bryant 10-17-2, Radmanovic 20-30-0, Fortson 5-5-0-3, Daniels 2-2-0-3, Totter 4-6-0-1-6, Potapenko 2-2-0-4.

WAS **WASHINGTON** — Jamison 20-12-10, Jeffries 18-12-11, Hayward 2-5-0-2, Wells 13-13-1-8, H-10-10-21, Davis 7-20-11-27, Buffin 10-10-2, Hayes 5-0-2-2, Totter 14-23-10-2, Brown 10-9-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2, Brown 10-9-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2.

SEATTLE — Jamison 20-12-10, Jeffries 18-12-11, Hayward 2-5-0-2, Wells 13-13-1-8, H-10-10-21, Davis 7-20-11-27, Buffin 10-10-2, Hayes 5-0-2-2, Totter 14-23-10-2, Brown 10-9-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2.

Grizzlies 101, Pistons 79

MEMPHIS — Battier 4-6-12-12, Gasol 5-15-22, Wright 4-8-10-4, Miller 9-20-17, Williams 1-3-0-0, McPherson 2-4-0-0, Harrison 2-3-1-0-1, Walton 3-7-0-0, Swift 1-0-1-1, Takalakis 4-0-0-0, Jones 0-0-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2.

DETROIT — Price 4-8-5-13, R.Wallace 3-7-0-0, B.Wallace 1-3-2-3, Hamilton 10-10-14-14, B. Wall 3-0-1-8, McPherson 2-4-0-0, Harrison 2-3-1-0-1, Walton 3-7-0-0, Swift 1-0-1-1, Takalakis 4-0-0-0, Jones 0-0-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2.

DETROIT — Price 4-8-5-13, R.Wallace 3-7-0-0, B.Wallace 1-3-2-3, Hamilton 10-10-14-14, B. Wall 3-0-1-8, McPherson 2-4-0-0, Harrison 2-3-1-0-1, Walton 3-7-0-0, Swift 1-0-1-1, Takalakis 4-0-0-0, Jones 0-0-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2.

Spurs 111, Pacers 98

INDIANA — Curry 11-2-0-2, O'Neal 12-30-8-8, Foster 5-7-14-12, Timlin 7-9-0-0, Harrison 2-3-1-0-1, Walton 3-7-0-0, Swift 1-0-1-1, Takalakis 4-0-0-0, Jones 0-0-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2.

SAN ANTONIO — Duncan 27-12-11, Ginobili 19-12-11, Parker 12-11-11, McPherson 2-4-0-0, Harrison 2-3-1-0-1, Walton 3-7-0-0, Swift 1-0-1-1, Takalakis 4-0-0-0, Jones 0-0-0-0, Totter 14-23-10-2.

Divac has back surgery

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — Los Angeles Lakers center David Divac underwent surgery to repair a herniated disc Thursday and is expected to miss three months.

Divac originally hurt his back during a workout before training camp and was on the injured list from Nov. 22. He missed his last three games and was placed on the injured list Dec. 22.

Lawyers seek media queries in Bryant case

The Associated Press

DENVER — Attorneys for the woman who accused Bryant of rape say his defense team is requesting to interview news media organizations that covered the case for the sole purpose of delaying her civil trial.

The woman's lawyers said Thursday that Bryant's defense team wants to interview "numerous nonparties" in the case, which will cause significant delays and cost the woman tens of thousands of dollars in legal expenses.

The attorneys' request in response to Bryant's argument that others were at least partly responsible for emotional injuries the woman allegedly suffered since her encounter with Bryant in a Vail-area hotel in June 2003.

Bryant's attorneys have argued the woman's alleged injuries may have been caused by numerous media organizations that published information about the case.

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Sexant's new baseball

1B Mientkiewicz has had baseball since final out

The Associated Press

BOSTON — Red Sox fans have seen the video over and over again. A ground ball to pitcher Keith Foulke. He tosses it underhand to backup first baseman Doug Mientkiewicz, who raises it high to Boston celebrates its first World Series championship in 86 years.

Mientkiewicz still hasn't let go of the ball. But now the Red Sox want it back.

Calling the ball, "my retirement fund," Mientkiewicz stored it in a safe deposit box. Red Sox CEO Larry Lucchino said Thursday he's going to ask Mientkiewicz to return it to the team.

"We want it to be part of Red Sox archives or museums so it can be shared with the fans," Lucchino told The Boston Globe. "We would hope he would understand the historical nature of this."

Mientkiewicz seems to understand it very well, which is exactly why he held on to it.

Historic baseballs have recently fetched impressive sums. The baseball Red Sox catcher Carlton Fisk batted off the foul pole in

the 1975 World Series sold for \$113,373. The ball Barry Bonds hit with his 73rd home run went for \$450,000. The most expensive baseball so far is Mark McGwire's 70th homer, which went for \$3 million.

Mientkiewicz said he thinks the Boston World Series ball has more value than a home run ball.

"Those are important and all, don't get me wrong, but there are always going to be more home runs," he said. "This is something that took 86 years, and 86 years is a long time. Personally, I went through hell and back this year. But winning the World Series is something I'm going to remember for a long time."

Mientkiewicz came to Boston from Minnesota in the three-team midseason deal that sent Boston slugger Jose Gabea to the Chicago Cubs.

Mientkiewicz, who batted .215 for Boston, was used primarily as a late innings defensive replacement, and the former Gold Glove first baseman has enough of his unhappiness with the role.

Boston broke its championship

drought by beating the New York Yankees in seven games in the American League championship series, then sweeping the St. Louis Cardinals in four games in the World Series.

After the game, Mientkiewicz said he put the ball in his locker, then gave it to his wife, Jodi, who put it in her purse. The next day, the ball was authenticated by Major League Baseball.

Carmine Tiso, spokesman for MLB, told the Globe that Mientkiewicz owns the baseball, though Jose Januszewski, Red Sox director of corporate partnerships, said he thinks the team owns it.

Mientkiewicz couldn't be reached for comment Thursday by the Globe after Lucchino said the club wanted the ball back. But on Wednesday, he left no doubt that he believes the ball belongs to him.

"I know this ball has a lot of sentimental value," Mientkiewicz said. "I hope I don't have to use it for the money. It would be cool if we have kids someday to have it stay in our family for a long time. But I can't be bought. I'm stating that the four years of Florida and Boston are my kids. At least."

Baseball free agent signings

NEW YORK (AP) — The 115 free agents who have signed, with name, position, former club, contract and salary. The contract information was obtained by The Associated Press from player and agent.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

ANAHIM (4) — Signed Steve Finley, of, Los Angeles, to a \$14 million, two-year contract; signed Jason Varitek, 3B, the Boston Red Sox, to a \$5 million, two-year contract; signed Paul Byrd, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$4 million, one-year contract; signed Orlando Cabrera, ss, Boston, to a \$3 million, one-year contract.

BALTIMORE (3) — Re-signed BJ Surhoff, of, to a \$1.1 million, one-year contract; signed Steve Lincecum, 2B, the Seattle Mariners, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Steve Kline, 1B, St. Louis, to a \$1.5 million, two-year contract.

BOSTON (8) — Re-signed Doug Mirebalch, of, to a \$3 million, two-year contract; signed Matt Maletz, 1B, Arizona, to a \$750,000, one-year contract; signed David Wells, ss, San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract; signed Jose Hernandez, 2B, the New York Yankees, to a \$1 million, one-year contract; signed Greg Gagne, 1B, Los Angeles, to a \$2.5 million, four-year contract; signed Matt Clement, 4B, Chicago Cubs, to a \$2.5 million, three-year contract; re-signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Josie Manzanillo, 1B, Florida, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

CHICAGO (2) — Signed Dustin Hermanson, 1B, San Francisco, to a \$5.5 million, one-year contract; signed Hernandez, 2B, Oakland, to a \$10.15 million, two-year contract.

CLEVELAND (2) — Re-signed Bob Wickman, 1B, to a \$7.5 million, one-year contract; signed Mike Cudd, 1B, the New York Yankees, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

DETROIT (4) — Signed Troy Percival, 1B, Oakland, to a \$2 million, one-year contract; signed Ramon Martinez, ss, Chicago, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

KANSAS CITY (2) — Re-signed Kevin Apple, 1B, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Jose Lima, 1B, Los Angeles, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract.

MINNESOTA (4) — Signed Al Castro, 1B, Cincinnati, to a \$2.05 million, two-year contract; signed Mike Cudd, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$1.8 million, two-year contract; re-signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; re-signed Terry Mulholland, 1B, to a minor league contract (\$750,000).

NEW YORK (2) — Re-signed Tim Lincecum, 2B, to an \$800,000, one-year contract; signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, two-year contract; signed Carl Pavano, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$1.5 million, two-year contract; signed Arnie Wright, 1B, Atlanta, to a \$2 million, three-year contract; signed Tim Lincecum, 2B, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

ST. LOUIS (2) — Re-signed Dan Wilson, c, to a \$1.75 million, one-year contract; signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, two-year contract; signed Adrian Beltré, 3B,

War wounded get glimpse of Series trophy



REBEA CRITZER/Special to Stars and Stripes

Forced to throw down his New York Yankees baseball cap for the photo, John Ruchala (wearing the camouflaged Boston Red Sox cap) laughs with his colleagues from Human Resources Command Lt. Col. Pete Mueller (back left) and Col. Jeff Perry (back right) as Boston Red Sox President and CEO Larry Lucchino (front left) grinds the Yankees cap to the floor Thursday inside the Pentagon. Ruchala said he's a "Yankees fan and a good sport." Lucchino brought the World Series trophy to the Washington area to show recovering veterans at Bethesda Naval Medical Center, Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Pentagon as an appreciation for the servicemen's sacrifices. The Red Sox won the World Series in October after defeating the Yankees in the American League playoffs.

Diamondbacks, Green fail to reach agreement

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Arizona Diamondbacks and Los Angeles Dodgers slugger Shawn Green failed to reach an agreement on a contract extension on Tuesday, and the tentative trade appeared to have fallen through.

A 48-hour window for the Diamondbacks to negotiate with Green expired Thursday, and Dodgers General Manager Paul DePodesta declared the trade in its present form "dead."

Neither Diamondbacks general partner Ken Kendrick nor Green's agent Greg Genske returned telephone calls.

The New York Yankees, meanwhile, reached an agreement on a \$32 million, two-year contract extension for Randy Johnson, a prerequisite to the Big Unit waiving his no-trade clause for a deal to New York.

Arizona is to receive pitchers Javier Vazquez and Brad Halsey along with catching prospect Diomed Navarro and \$9 million for Johnson. The Diamondbacks intended to send Navarro and minor league pitcher William Justus to Los Angeles for Green and \$8 million.

Green has a one year and \$16 million remaining on his contract, which includes a no-trade clause. The prospect of his waiving the no-trade clause seemed unlikely. Green refused the trade, but it could create an awkward situation for his return to Los Angeles team that had tried in at least

two deals to get rid of him. Green would have been part of the three-team, 10-player trade announced by Dodgers, Diamondbacks and Yankees that fell apart last month.

Astros say they've made a final offer to Beltran

HOUSTON — The Houston Astros said Thursday that they've made their final offer to Carlos Beltran. They'll find out this week whether it was enough to keep the All-Star center fielder.

"The offer on the table is our final offer," general manager Tim Lincecum said. "We're not interested in going any higher."

Houston faces an 11 p.m. CST Series deadline to re-sign Beltran. After that, under baseball rules the Astros would be allowed to strike a deal with him until May 1.

Boggs to get Red Sox cap on Hall of Fame plaque

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Wade Boggs will have a Boston Red Sox cap on his Hall of Fame plaque.

Boggs, elected to the Hall this week along with Ryne Sandberg, spent the first 11 seasons of his career with Boston, winning five American League batting titles. He played with the New York Yankees from 1993-97, then finished with two seasons for his hometown Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

The Hall picks which cap will appear on a player's bronze plaque. Boggs told the Hall he didn't care which team was selected.

Los Angeles, to a \$64 million, five-year contract; announced Ron Villone, 1B, accepted salary arbitration, signed Poley Reese, ss, Boston, to a \$2.1 million, one-year contract.

TAMPA BAY (1) — Signed Alex Gonzalez, ss, San Diego, to a \$1.75 million, one-year contract.

TEXAS (7) — Re-signed Doug Broccoli, 1B, to a \$1 million, one-year contract; signed Jason Varitek, 3B, the Boston Red Sox, to a \$5 million, two-year contract; re-signed Tim Lincecum, 2B, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract (\$385,000); re-signed John Wadsworth, 1B, to a \$2.7 million, two-year contract; signed Greg Gagne, 1B, Arizona, to a minor league contract (\$650,000); re-signed David Wells, ss, San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

TORONTO (2) — Re-signed Greg Myers, c, to a minor league contract (\$750,000); signed Corey Kosile, 1B, Minnesota, to a \$17 million, three-year contract; re-signed Gregg Zaun, c, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

NATIONAL LEAGUE
ARIZONA (6) — Re-signed Quinton McCracken, 1B, to a minor league contract (\$750,000); signed Troy Glavin, 3B, Anaheim, to a \$4.5 million, four-year contract; signed Russ Ortiz, 1B, Atlanta, to a \$33 million, one-year contract; signed Kelly Stinnett, c, Kansas City, to a minor league contract; re-signed Rocco Haymon, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Craig Kopp, ss, Milwaukee, to a \$3.1 million, two-year contract.

ATLANTA (4) — Re-signed Julio Franco, 1B, Atlanta, to a \$3.1 million, one-year contract.

CHICAGO (5) — Re-signed glendon Rusch, 1B, to a \$4 million, one-year contract; re-signed Norm Garciaparra, ss, to a \$6 million, one-year contract; re-signed Todd Helton, 1B, Colorado, to a \$500,000, one-year contract.

CINCINNATI (5) — Re-signed Paul Wilson, 1B, to an \$8.2 million, two-year contract; signed David Weathers, 1B, Florida, to a \$1.35 million, one-year contract; signed Kent Hrbek, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Joe Randa, 3B, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Eric Milton, 1B, Philadelphia, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract.

COLORADO (2) — Re-signed Todd Greene, c, to a \$750,000, one-year contract; re-signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Deshaun Reelford, 2B, Kansas City, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

FLORIDA (6) — Re-signed Damien Easley, 2B, to a \$750,000, one-year contract; signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract (\$425,000); signed Al Leiter, 1B, the New York Yankees, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Todd Jones, 1B, Philadelphia, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Antonio Alfonseca, 1B, Atlanta, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Lamele Valdez, 1B, to a one-year contract.

HOUSTON (4) — Re-signed Jose Vizcaino, ss, to a \$1.75 million, one-year contract; re-signed Orlando Palmeiro, of, to an \$800,000, one-year contract; re-signed Russ Springer, 1B, to a minor league contract (\$550,000); announced Roger Clemens, 1B, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

LOS ANGELES (2) — Signed Ricky Ledee, of, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Jeff Kent, 2B, Houston, to a \$17 million, two-year contract; signed Willy Alvarez, 1B, to a \$4 million, one-year contract; signed Jose Valentin, 3B, Chicago White Sox, to a \$1 million, one-year contract; signed J.D. Drew, of, Atlanta, to a \$55 million, one-year contract.

MILWAUKEE (1) — Signed Damian Miller, c, Oakland, to an \$8.75 million, three-year contract.

NEW YORK (4) — Re-signed Kris Benson, 1B, to a \$22.5 million, three-year contract; re-signed Mike DeLeon, 1B, to a \$1.15 million, one-year contract; signed Pedro Martinez, 1B, Boston, to a \$3.5 million, four-year contract; signed Andres Galaraga, 1B, Anaheim, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

PHILADELPHIA (5) — Re-signed Tony Lidle, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Todd Pratt, c, to a \$750,000, one-year contract; signed Brent Compton, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, two-year contract; signed Jon Lieke, 1B, New York Yankees, to a \$2.1 million, one-year contract; signed Placido Polanco, 2B, accepted salary arbitration.

ST. LOUIS (6) — Re-signed Cal Eldred, 1B, to a \$600,000, one-year contract; re-signed John Mabry, of, to a \$725,000, one-year contract; re-signed Matt Morris, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Einar Valdez, 1B, Montreal, to a \$600,000, one-year contract; signed Mike Myers, 1B, Boston, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Mike Grudzielanek, 2B, Chicago Cubs, to a \$1 million, one-year contract.

SAN DIEGO (5) — Signed Rudy Seanez, 1B, Florida, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Randy Reyes, 1B, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Woody Williams, 1B, Los Angeles, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Eric Young, of, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract; signed Mark Sweeney, of, Colorado, to a \$750,000, one-year contract.

SAN FRANCISCO (6) — Signed Omar Vizquel, ss, Cleveland, to a \$12.5 million, three-year contract; signed Armando Benitez, 1B, Florida, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Jason Kendall, c, St. Louis, to a \$1.5 million, three-year contract; signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract; signed Moises Alou, of, Chicago Cubs, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

WASHINGTON (2) — Signed Cristian Guzman, ss, Minnesota, to a \$16.8 million, three-year contract; signed Armando Benitez, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, two-year contract; signed Jason Pridmore, 1B, to a \$2.5 million, one-year contract.

JAPANESE CENTRAL LEAGUE
YOKOHAMA (1) — Signed Kappei, of, Boston, to a one-year contract.

Familiar refrain in Philly

After losing three straight NFC title games, it's Super Bowl or bust once again for Eagles

By ROB MAADDI
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — New year, another playoff season, same theme for the Philadelphia Eagles: It's Super Bowl or bust.

The Eagles set a franchise record with 13 victories this season, won their fourth straight NFC East title and finished first in the conference for the third year in a row.

None of it matters if they don't reach the Super Bowl after losing the past three NFC championship games.

"You don't win the Super Bowl and no one really cares," quarterback Donovan McNabb said. "No one cares who finished second and probably a lot of people can't even remember who finished second in most of the Super Bowls. If you don't win the Super Bowl, it doesn't matter what you did during the year."

The Eagles will play their first playoff game against Seattle, St. Louis or Minnesota on Jan. 16. For some players, it'll be their first action in four weeks.

After star wide receiver Terrell Owens went down with an ankle injury that probably will keep him out the rest of the season, coach Andy Reid decided to rest several of his key starters in the final two regular-season games because the Eagles already had secured home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

McNabb played one quarter, while running back Brian Westbrook and defensive end Jevon Kearse didn't play in the past two games.

Some critics questioned Reid's philosophy, saying the long layoff will hurt the Eagles. Other coaches, such as New England's Bill Belichick, used an opposite approach, playing the regulars in meaningless games.

"I have a lot of confidence in our guys and wouldn't have been able to do this without them," Reid said. "I've got some tremendous leaders in that locker room and guys that will be very focused in on what is at hand, coming up in the playoffs. I am looking forward to it and I think they are."

With mostly reserves playing the past two games, the Eagles were outscored 58-17 in losses to the Rams and Cincinnati. Only the 1967 Green Bay Packers and 1972 Washington Redskins went to the Super Bowl after losing the final two regular-season games. The Packers beat Oakland, while the Redskins lost to Miami.

"We'll be well-rested and we'll have all our bullets back, ready to go out there in the first game," cornerback Sheldon Brown said.

Owens' injury was a devastating blow to an offense that was nearly unstoppable in the first 12 games of the season. The Eagles averaged 28.3 points in the first dozen games, won nine of those by double-digit margins and five by at least 21 points.

Without Owens, Philadelphia's receiving corps — Todd Pinkston, Freddie Mitchell, Greg Lewis and Billy McMillen — is ordinary at best. But the Eagles still have McNabb and



AP

Despite being huge favorites and playing at home in the past two NFC championship games, the Eagles were throttled by Tampa Bay and Carolina.

Westbrook, a dangerous threat who had 1,515 yards rushing and receiving.

McNabb had the best season of his six-year career, throwing for 3,875 yards, 31 touchdowns and just eight interceptions to earn his fifth trip to the Pro Bowl. He's determined to get the Eagles to the Super Bowl.

"I love to rise to the challenge in big games," McNabb said. "I've played in many big games in my career so far and I think I've played well in those big games. I'm not putting the NFC championships all on my back. This is a team game. We lost. I take the blame most of the time, but I think everybody else should take the blame, as well."

If Reid's approach backfires, he could be the main target for any such blame.

Hasselbeck has learned from his great gaffe

The Associated Press

Matt Hasselbeck is reminded often about his comments before the overtime coin flip at

Green Bay in last season's playoffs.

"If I hadn't done that, no one would know who I was," he said as Seattle prepared for the playoff matchup with St. Louis.

It's hard to forget. Hasselbeck was jawing good-naturedly with Ryan Longwell and Ahman Green of the Packers when the referee's microphone clicked on. It caught Hasselbeck barking, "We want the ball and we're going to score!"

Next came another dubious moment for Hasselbeck. His throw to Alex Hanner was intercepted by Al Harris and returned for a 52-yard TD, ending Seattle's season.

"I didn't dwell on it," Hasselbeck said. "People ask if it happened to me. It didn't. It was what it was, a play you'd like to have back. I watched it on film with (quarterbacks coach) Jim Zorn after the season was over, like I would do with any other game. We learned from it."

He's promised that neither event will happen again. He'll watch his mouth when the microphone is nearby, and said he learned from the game-ending mistake.

Preparing for Peyton

Never one to hold back, Broncos defensive coordinator Larry Coyer said Denver plans "to go raise mortal hell" with the Indianapolis offense on Sunday.

In an animated interview, Coyer acknowledged the huge challenge the Colts present, but said nobody on the Broncos was surrendering.

His most fiery comments came concerning Broncos rookie Roc Alexander, who has been forced into a nickel back role in the secondary and will have to cover one of Indianapolis' three 1,000-yard receivers.

"It's tough for everybody," Coyer said. "It's competitive. These are good players. But the thought process can be that way. We're going to win. We are. We are the way we are. And we've got to go raise hell and see who wins. We're going to go raise mortal hell and we'll find out."

Coyer acknowledged his players weren't ready the last time they traveled to Indianapolis, a 41-10 loss in last season's playoffs.

He gave credit to the Colts' coaching staff and praised Peyton Manning.

"The quarterback is so adept at finding where the holes are, it makes you want to puke," he said.

Steelers have everything it takes to win it all

By CHARLES BRICKER
South Florida Sun-Sentinel

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. —

I'm poring over the Pittsburgh Steelers season, game by game, looking for something substantive

anything — that would suggest they won't win Super Bowl XXXIX.

It's not there. There are glitches, like Willie Ponder's 91-yard return for a touchdown to open the Giants game on Dec. 18. That must have given coach Bill Cowher apoplexy.

And Rudi Johnson of the Bengals nicked them for 149 rushing yards and Terry Glenn caught for 151 in the Dallas game.

But these are not vulnerabilities — not when you don't see lapses like these in other games.

When you examine the Steelers, week by week, from top to bottom, and look not just for holes but for their accomplishments, but the general psychology of the club, which allows it to play at a high level in big moments, it's difficult to find any reason why they won't win it all.

Of course, weird things happen in playoff games. But there are only so many Music City Miracles there. Injuries stall top-tier talents, like the one to receiver Terrell Owens, which dooms the Eagles' chances.

The Steelers have their dings and dings, but they don't have any key players, such as cornerback Ty Law of the Patriots, who have missed so many games it's



AP

Running back Jerome Bettis, left, and wide receiver Hines Ward (86) are key components of an offense that can either air it out or grind it out. Pittsburgh was nearly flawless in its 15-1 season.

going to take precious time to shed the rust.

They pass well, though selectively.

They defend the run. They have excellent linebackers who not only blitz but drop efficiently into coverage.

They have an astonishingly composed rookie quarterback. They have superb coaching with Cowher and the best defensive coordinator in football in Dick LeBeau.

They defeat the teams they're supposed to defeat, and they defeat the elite clubs as well.

But what they do best is run the ball, and they run it 39 times a

game, and a few days ago, Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weis imparted some wisdom about that phase of the game.

"There are certain stats in the NFL that are critical ones. Turnovers obviously being a critical one. But rushing attempts plus pass completions — the combination of those two things usually determine the better teams, and the teams that win the most," Weis said.

A year ago the Steelers ran only 43.7 percent of the time and had a 6-10 record. This year they've run 61.1 percent and are 15-1. They signed Duce Staley as an unrestricted free agent, and he battered defenses for 101 yards a game until he was hurt. In came

Jerome Bettis, who has had six 100-yard games since then.

On Sunday, in a game that would not alter his protected home-field position in the playoffs, Cowher rested crucial starters, including Staley and Bettis, and sent in an undrafted rookie from North Carolina named Willie Parker.

Into one of the strongest run defenses, Parker produced 102 yards against Buffalo, which needed to win to make the playoffs.

Is Parker that good? Probably not. But give some credit to Pittsburgh's offensive linemen, none of whom has missed a start — left to right Marvel Smith, Alan Faneca, Jeff Hartings, Oliver Ross and Keydrick Vincent.

The likelihood is that the Steelers will play their divisional game against San Diego and then New England in the AFC title game. They've not been beaten at Heinz Field and have given up only two touchdowns in their past four home games.

Certainly it's possible that the defense or offense could have an off day, though not both. The Giants got 30 points, but the Steelers scored 33. They managed only 13 points from the Dolphins but gave up just three.

They do what's required on the day and there's too much veteran leadership, especially along the offensive line, to believe they'll crack psychologically.

The Pittsburgh Steelers are going to win the Super Bowl.

Linebackers pick for AP All-Pro Team

By BARRY WILNER

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Peyton Manning was unstoppable on the field this season, and in the All-Pro voting, too.

The record-setting Indianapolis Colts quarterback was a unanimous choice Thursday for The Associated Press 2004 NFL All-Pro Team. Manning received all 48 first-place votes from a nationwide panel of writers and broadcasters who cover pro football, the only player to sweep the voting this year.

After sharing the MVP award with Steve McNair last year, Manning received a new level in '04.

"Last year was fun," Manning said. "This year was more fun because the things we wanted to do, we came out, worked on them and got them done."

Manning broke Dan Marino's 20-year-old record for touchdown passes in a season with 49, and shattered Steve Young's passer rating mark with a 121.1. Indeed, he would have had to go 6-for-20 with five interceptions in the final game to not break the record.

Manning also was the AP All-Pro quarterback in 2003, when he was the co-MVP with McNair of Tennessee. The AP Most Valuable Player will be announced on Monday.

Surprisingly, despite the Colts' prolific offense, Manning was their only All-Pro on that side of

the ball. Defensive end Dwight Freeney, the NFL sacks leader with 16, made it on a defense.

The AFC's dominance this season was evident on the All-Pro team, with 19 players from that conference and just 10 from the NFC.

Pittsburgh, with a 15-1 regular-season mark, had the most AFC players: guard Alan Faneca, center Jeff Hartings and inside linebacker James Farrior. Faneca made it for the third time, and Hartings and Farrior were among 17 first-time All-Pro.

Philadelphia also had three members: wide receiver Terrell Owens, making it for the fourth time; safety Brian Dawkins (third time) and cornerback Lito Sheppard (first).

Although Minnesota's defense struggled this year, it had a prime player in tackler Kevin Williams, also a new All-Pro.

"He's just an elite player," Vikings coach Mike Tice said. "Kevin makes a lot of plays, and in big games he seems to play better."

Also among players making an All-Pro debut was 31-year-old Curtis Martin, who won his first rushing title this season. Martin, of the New York Jets, has rushed for at least 1,000 yards in all 10 of his NFL seasons, tying the record of Hall of Famer Barry Sanders.

He was joined in the backfield by LaDainian Tomlinson of San Diego, also a first-time. So was

Manning tops All-Pro Team

Peyton Manning was the only player to sweep The Associated Press 2004 NFL All-Pro Team voting this year, Manning threw for 49 touchdowns, breaking Dan Marino's record, and had a passer rating of 121.1.

Offense

Wide Receivers

Terrell Owens, Philadelphia;
Muhsin Muhammad, Carolina

Tackles

Walter Jones, Seattle; Willie Anderson, Cincinnati; William Roaf, Kansas City

Guards

Alan Faneca, Pittsburgh; Brian Winters, Kansas City

Center

Jeff Hartings, Pittsburgh

Tight End

Antonio Gates, San Diego

Quarterback

Peyton Manning, Indianapolis

Running Backs

Curtis Martin, NY Jets; LaDainian Tomlinson, San Diego

Fullback

Willie Henderson, Green Bay

Specialists

Shane Lechler, Oakland - Punter
Adam Vinatieri, New England - Placekicker

Eddie Drummond, Detroit - Kick Returner

Defense

Ends

Dwight Freeney, Indianapolis;
Julius Peppers, Carolina

Tackles

Kevin Williams, Minnesota; Richard Seymour, New England

Inside Linebackers

James Farrior, Pittsburgh; Ray Lewis, Baltimore

Outside Linebackers

Takeo Spikes, Buffalo; Derrick Brooks, Tampa Bay

Cornerbacks

Ronde Barber, Tampa Bay; Champ Bailey, Denver; Lito Sheppard, Philadelphia

Safeties

Ed Reed, Baltimore; Brian Dawkins, Philadelphia



was nothing I was expecting," he said.

"I'm a grunt worshipping, that's the way I look at it. That's what I do and I accepted that role a long time ago. I'm not expecting to get any accolades when I go out there."

Baltimore inside linebacker Ray Lewis made the team for the fifth time, the most among 2004 All-Pro. Tampa Bay outside LB Derrick Brooks made it for the fourth time, as did Oakland punter Shane Lechler and Kansas City tackle William Roaf.

Repeaters from 2003 were Manning, Lewis, Roaf, Lechler and New England defensive tackle Richard Seymour — all AFC players.

"It's just a blessing," Seymour said. "When I came into the National Football League, I really didn't know how good I was going to be. Just to come here and be considered one of the best, it's humbling."

Kick returner Eddie Drummond made it even though he missed the final month with a shoulder injury. That shows how much impact he had for the Lions before being sidelined: Drummond finished first in the NFL in punt returns (13.2 yards average) and second in kickoff returns (26.6 average). He returned two of each for touchdowns.

In a loss to Jacksonville, he returned two punts for touchdowns in the fourth quarter and finished with six punt returns for 199 yards.

Jets' Vilma named top defensive rookie of year

By ANDREA ADELSON

The Associated Press

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. — Jonathan Vilma finished working out at the University of Miami one day last spring when he spotted fellow Hurricane alum Santana Moss.

Vilma rushed up to Moss and told him how much he wanted to play for the New York Jets. Little did Vilma know, the Jets wanted him No. 12 overall pick in the draft. Look: Vilma now.

A sensational debut season made him The Associated Press 2004 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year. Vilma capped the regular season with a bang, remaining an interception for a touchdown in a 32-29 overtime loss to the Rams. Not bad for a player some skeptics said was too small to play middle linebacker in the NFL. Vilma always knew he would make an impact his first year. So did Moss, coach Herman Edwards and defensive coordinator Donnie Henderson.

"When we first drafted him, we knew we had a guy that had all the characteristics we were looking for," Henderson said.

"Leadership, passion for the game, the way he goes around and made plays. Obviously he's stepped up and took on the re-

sponsibility, and the opportunity has been good for him."

Vilma, who earned 21 votes from a national panel of 48 writers and broadcasters who cover pro football, came into training camp ready to win a starting job as part of a revamped Jets linebacking corps. Though Henderson penciled in veteran Sam Cowart to start, Vilma competed hard for the job.

In Week 2, Cowart sprained his left knee. Instead of struggling in the middle, Vilma stepped in as if he had been the starter for years. Pro Bowl defensive end John Abraham said Vilma made everything look so easy.

"After watching him play, a lot of people say he is already a vet," Abraham said. "I would like to be self like a vet. He was far past his years when he came in here."

"That has plenty to do with his college background. Vilma is just the latest in a line of stellar linebackers from Miami, following Dan Morgan, Ray Lewis and Nate Webster, among others. He became a starter his sophomore year when it was his high schooler, Fritz, Vilma never would have set foot on a football field."

Fritz Vilma always feared his son would get injured. But Jonathan kept nagging until his father finally said he could play in high school.



New York Jets LB Jonathan Vilma received 21 of 48 votes to earn the AP defensive rookie award.

Vilma knew he wanted to become a Hurricane. Moss knew it, too, because he heard plenty about him from Vilma's sister, who was in one of his classes at Miami.

"Everyone talked about him," said Moss, who was a senior when Vilma was a true freshman. "When he came in and made play after play, I always thought when he takes over this thing and learns it, he is going to be dominant. It's shown. When he came in I had no doubt in my mind he was going to be that type of player."

Vilma had one of his best games against Arizona in November, making 10 tackles, with an interception and fumble recovery to stop two fourth-quarter drives.

Crennel given OK to meet with 49ers

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The San Francisco 49ers received permission from New England on Thursday to interview Patriots defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel for their coaching vacancy.

One day after firing Dennis Erickson, the 49ers set out to find his replacement. Crennel will be the first candidate to interview for the job when he meets with team officials Saturday. Crennel also is scheduled to interview with Cleveland on Friday.

Owner John York said Wednesday when he also dismissed general manager Terry Donahue — that his first priority is hiring a coach.

Crennel has been New England's defensive coordinator since 2001, helping the team win two Super Bowl titles and go 14-2 this season.

Crennel also was an assistant for Bill Parcells with the New York Giants.

Interviewing Crennel, who is black, satisfies an NFL rule that requires teams to interview at least one minority candidate for coaching vacancies.

York hinted Wednesday that he was interested in Southern California coach Pete Carroll, who won his second straight college championship this week. Carroll

NFL briefs

said Thursday that he has no interest in the job.

"I have not been contacted, and I'm not interested," Carroll said.

Ex-Cowboy Goodrich's death denied in hit-and-run accident

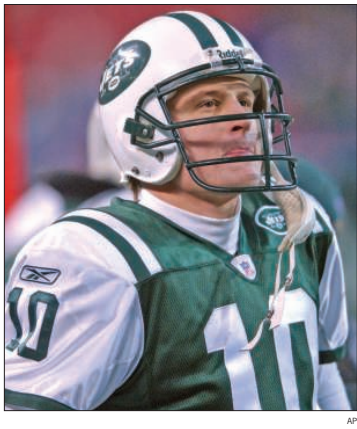
DALLAS Former Dallas Cowboys defensive back Dwayne Goodrich's appeal of his conviction in a deadly hit-and-run accident two years ago was denied Thursday.

He was convicted in August 2003 on two counts of criminally negligent homicide and sentenced to 7 1/2 years in prison.

Demont Matthews, 23, and Joby Wood, 21, both of Plano were rescuing a driver from a burning car on Interstate 35 when they were struck by Goodrich's BMW. He left the scene.

Goodrich told jurors that a sport utility vehicle blocked his view of the pre-dawn accident. He said he originally believed, or hoped, he had hit debris. Goodrich returned to the scene hours later and then turned himself into police.

Goodrich told KDFW that he feared had that two good men died that night, but he doesn't think he should have to go to jail.



With quarterback Chad Pennington, above, still nursing a sore shoulder, the New York Jets will need RB Curtis Martin to be productive.

Martin: Jets RB quietly adding to great résumé

MARTIN, FROM BACK PAGE

So he became one of the best in NFL history in that area, too, joining Sanders as the only players to start their careers with 10 straight 1,000 yard seasons. In addition to everything else he did this season, Martin quietly moved up the NFL career rushing list into fourth place, passing Hall of Famers Eric Dickerson, Tony Dorsett, Jim Brown, Marcus Allen and Franco Harris.

"It couldn't happen to a better player in our league," Jets coach Herman Edwards said. "You're talking about a class guy, a guy that's under a radar screen for most of his career. I'm glad I got to watch it and be a part of it. To watch him achieve that, I think it's outstanding."

Though Martin might not have the attention of the nation, he certainly has it from the NFL.

"He's a great one," Chargers coach Marty Schottenheimer said. "I've always admired him. He goes about his business and there's not a lot of fanfare and there's not a lot of pomp and circumstance. All he does is bring it to you every Sunday."

Martin surely will have to bring it in the playoff game against San Diego. He ran for 119 yards and two touchdowns in the first meeting, a 34-28 victory. The Jets should stress the running game even more, because quarterback Chad Pennington still has a sore right shoulder, and Martin is their best hope at taking the crowd out early and helping the Jets play ball control.

If they can advance, Martin will be closer to the one thing missing from his résumé: a Super Bowl victory.

So he again will help his team in the only way he knows: working hard and, as always, without

New York Jets (10-6) at San Diego Chargers (12-4)

SUNDAY
2:05 p.m. Central European Time
AFC-ALBUQUERQUE
OPENING LINE - Chargers by 6
AFC-ALBUQUERQUE - Jets 7 1/2
CHARGERS RECORD - Chargers lead 17-11 overall.
LAST MEETING - Jets beat Chargers 34-28 on Sept. 19 at San Diego.

LAST MEETING - Jets beat Chargers 34-28 on Sept. 19 at San Diego.
IN THE OFFENSE - Jets lead 24-17.
IN THE DEFENSE - Chargers lead 17-11 overall.
IN THE PASSING GAME - Jets lead 17-11 overall.
IN THE RUSHING GAME - Jets lead 17-11 overall.

CHARGERS PASSING - OVERALL (18), RUSH (11), PASS (21).
CHARGERS RUSHING - OVERALL (18), RUSH (11), PASS (21).

KEY MATCHUP - Jets' secondary vs. Chargers' offensive line. In Week 2, Chargers were booed in their home opener. Jets' secondary led by safety Johnathan Johnson and cornerback Mike Anderson. Jets' offensive line led by center Matt Birk and guard Mike Anderson. Jets' defense led by safety Johnathan Johnson and cornerback Mike Anderson. Jets' offense led by quarterback Matt Ryan and running back Mike Anderson.

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES - Game features two Pro Bowl RBs. Jets' RB LaDainian Tomlinson rushed for 1,325 yards and led league with 17 TDs. Jets' RB Curtis Martin led league with 1,297 yards rushing and had 12 TDs. Chargers are 9-1 in their last 10 games. Jets have lost 11 of their last 12 games. Jets have lost 11 of their last 12 games. Jets have lost 11 of their last 12 games. Jets have lost 11 of their last 12 games.

Marty Schottenheimer fired current Jets coach Herman Edwards as his 10th coach for Kansas City (1992-94) when Schottenheimer was Chiefs head coach (1989-98).

much fanfare. Only this time, he will have the NFL rushing title in hand.

"It is no surprise why we are here, it is because of what Curtis has done and what he has accomplished this season," center Kevin Mouton said. "It's a great accomplishment, and it is something he is going to remember for a long time."

Rams' Bulger hitting his stride as top-notch NFL quarterback

BY JIM THOMAS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — The decision-making has improved noticeably. So has the pocket presence, and the red reads on blitzes. Yes, the red-zone interceptions raise red flags.

But the end-zone interception against the New York Jets on Sunday was as much a case of an imprecise route by Shaun McDonald as an errant throw by Marc Bulger.

Bulger's progress has been easy to overlook this season, given all of the issues, controversies, and soap operas swirling around Rams Park. But the overall picture is undeniable: Bulger is maturing into an upper-echelon NFL quarterback.

That was never more apparent than in Sunday's 32-29 overtime victory over the Jets. Playing with a bruised throwing shoulder that still isn't 100 percent, Bulger ravaged the Jets' sixth-ranked defense for 450 yards passing and three touchdowns.

The yardage total was the fifth-best in Rams franchise history.

Bulger's passer rating (116.4) and completion percentage (74.4) in that game both were the third-highest in his career.

"I think he's played very well in the past," coach Mike Martz said. "But to play like he did when it counted... Three for three in the final drive. I think, six for eight in overtime. He's the guy you want on your team when it's all on the line. I think that's probably as well as he played."

Whereas predecessor Kurt Warner seemed to pick up the Rams' offensive system instantly, it has taken Bulger a couple of seasons to become fully integrated into Air Martz. But it looks like he's there.

"The football knowledge is so much more of the mental aspects," Bulger said. "Game management, and knowing when to check the ball down. The game management, I think I've done a lot."

"You have to learn by making mistakes. It's one thing to study the protections. Study this, study that. But unless you make mistakes, I think that's when you learn more. So there are growing pains, but hopefully, I've stopped with the major ones."

Compared to last season, Bulger's passing yards, completion percentage, and passer rating are up. His interception total dropped from 12 in 2003 to 14 this season. Even factoring in that Bulger played in only 14 games this season compared to 15 a year ago, his interceptions have dropped from 1 1/2 a game in 2003 to one per game this season.

"I think right now Marc is intellectually close to where Kurt was," Martz said. "I don't know anybody's like Kurt. Kurt had such a tremendous ability to digest and decipher exactly what



St. Louis Rams quarterback Marc Bulger threw for 450 yards and three touchdowns against the New York Jets on Sunday.

was going down. It was like you could slow time down.

"And I think Marc is like that right now. But the difference between the two is Marc has such a dynamic delivery. The ball gets out of there so fast. And he's easily the most accurate guy we've had. Trent Green, I thought, was really accurate. I think Marc is there."

Bulger's completion rate of 66.4 percent this season is the second-best in franchise history, trailing only Warner's 67.7 percent in 2000. After missing 2 1/2 games with the shoulder injury, Bulger completed 74.2 percent of his passes in victories over Philadelphia and the Jets.

Before the Philly game, Bulger put on the bold front, insisting that his shoulder was 100 percent. It was only afterwards that he conceded that wasn't the case.

It's important, all right. In 11 quarters without him against Arizona, Carolina, and most of the San Francisco game, the Rams managed just two offensive touchdowns. In the two games he has been back, the Rams have scored 52 points.

"His development from the beginning of the year to now is just remarkable," Martz said. "His confidence level right now is sky high."

"It is his teammates' confidence in Bulger."

"If we protect Marc, Marc's going to make plays," Vets receiver Isaac Bruce said. "He's been making plays all the while he's been a starter. He's a great player."

But great players win playoff games, something Bulger has yet to accomplish. In his only postseason appearance, Bulger threw three interceptions in the fourth quarter and overtime of the Rams' 29-23 double-overtime loss to Carolina.

He gets a second crack at the postseason Saturday in Seattle, albeit with a Rams team that has more flaws than the 2003 squad.

St. Louis Rams (8-8) at Seattle Seahawks (9-7)

SATURDAY
10:30 a.m. Central European Time
AFC-ALBUQUERQUE
OPENING LINE - Seahawks by 4
AFC-ALBUQUERQUE - Rams 6 1/2
SEAHAWKS 5-11
SEAHAWKS RECORD - Rams lead 4 overall.

LAST MEETING - Rams beat Seahawks 23-12 on Nov. 14 at St. Louis.

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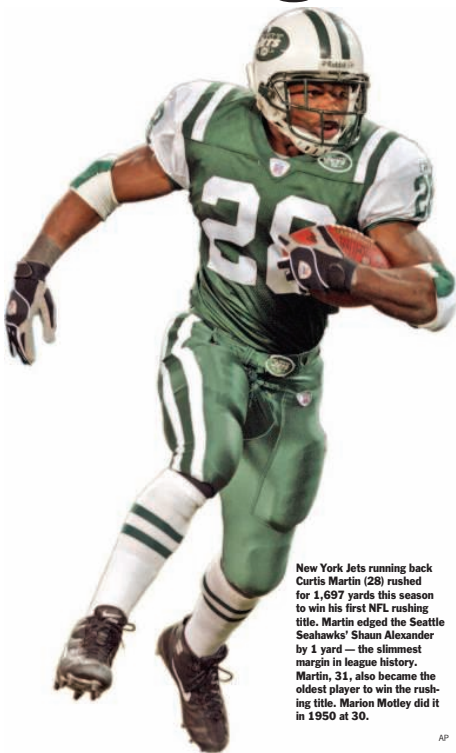
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SPORTS

Martin gains momentum



Record-breaking QB Manning
unanimous choice for AP All-Pro Team,
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New York Jets running back Curtis Martin (28) rushed for 1,697 yards this season to win his first NFL rushing title. Martin edged the Seattle Seahawks' Shaun Alexander by 1 yard — the slimmest margin in league history. Martin, 31, also became the oldest player to win the rushing title. Marion Motley did it in 1950 at 30.

AP

Fresh off his first NFL rushing title, Jet chasing bigger prize in playoffs

BY ANDREA ADELSON

The Associated Press

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y.

He came so close so many times before, Curtis Martin started to wonder whether he would ever win a rushing title.

Bigger names always surpassed him: Priest Holmes in 2001, Edgerrin James in 1999, Emmitt Smith and Barry Sanders in 1995. So while more popular players took the headlines, Martin kept working, kept setting lofty goals, kept believing that it would be his turn one day.

So on a tarmac in St. Louis on Sunday, the Jets' veteran finally got the news he always wanted to hear. He beat out Shaun Alexander for the NFL rushing title. By 1 yard. His mom, monitoring the Seahawks-Falcons game, kept Martin updated while the team waited on an airplane to head back home.

"That's the one individual accomplish-

ment I'm most proud of in my entire career," said Martin, preparing to lead the Jets in their wild-card game against San Diego on Saturday.

There have been plenty of achievements for the 31-year-old Martin, in his 10th NFL season. But this one seems most impressive, and could cement his place in the Hall of Fame. The quiet, humble back from Pittsburgh came into training camp in the best shape of his career, eager to prove he had plenty left in his legs.

He set three goals for himself: to run for 1,700 yards, win the rushing title and make the Pro Bowl. He was so obsessed with reaching 1,700, he made that his security code to get into the building at Jets headquarters. Unfortunately for Martin, he finished just 3 yards short of the mark.

Nonetheless, he ran for a career-high and team-record 1,697 yards, shattering his old mark of 1,513 to beat out Alexander by the slimmest margin in NFL history. The next closest was 7 yards in 1990, when Sanders topped Thurman Thomas.

Martin also became the oldest player to lead the NFL in rushing, surpassing Marion Motley, who did it in 1950 at the age of 30. And he also made his fourth Pro Bowl and his first All-Pro team.

"I knew that if I put the work in, if I sowed the right work, I believed that I could reach what I felt," Martin said. "This year was living proof of that. It is something that I am grateful for, but at the same time humbled by, simply because at the age I am, to have the ability and the mind-set to be consistent and perform the way we have this year, I am very humbled by it."

Martin generally has stayed out of the spotlight. There were always flashier backs, such as Smith and Terrell Davis. There were always craftier, more elusive backs, like Sanders. There were always bigger backs like James.

None of that ever bothered Martin, known more for his deliberate running style. He never asked for the headlines, never starred in commercials, never graced the cover of video games. Martin wanted just one thing: consistency.



Rams QB Bulger looks like one of NFL's best heading into playoffs

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Hamilton goes 0-for-10 from floor, still leads Pistons in scoring in loss to Grizzlies

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2004 PGA Tour Player of the Year Singh makes early statement in opening event of '05 season

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1B Mientkiewicz still holding ball from Red Sox's first World Series victory in 86 years with both hands

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Injuries to forwards not hurting No. 5 Duke (10-0) so far Page 26